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The Gujarat poll results

By Cho S. Ramaswamy

Everything is lost; tragedy has struck; the heavens have fallen; after this it could only be the deluge; God — if there be one — save the country; the BJP under Narendra Modi has won a thumping two-thirds majority in the elections to the Gujarat Assembly. The major English newspapers and Star TV, which had adopted the Congress under Sonia Gandhi as the only possible saviour of the pride of this nation from the clutches of P-nials — to borrow a description from the Election Commission — are still trying to recover from the shock delivered by the people of Gujarat. How could this happen? The media is still analysing the results of the Gujarat elections to discover what went wrong.

Actually, nothing went wrong and that is the problem of the media. Caste-wise division of Hindus, as hoped for by the Congress and the media, did not happen. The ten-month interval managed by the Election Commission, between the Godhra incident and the elections, did not erase the horrendous affair, as hoped for by the media, from public memory. Opinion polls, cheaper by the dozen, did not influence the voters. The Sonia magic, which is supposed to inspire and unite secular Indians against the communal and hardcore Hindus, did not work. The voters did not buy the Congress propaganda that it was the Vishwa Hindu Parishad which had torched the train in Godhra. Nor did they eat out of the hands of a section of the media which accused Mr. Modi of having engineered the ghastly post-Godhra riots.

It was the media which went wrong by attempting to suit its reports to its wishes. The Congress had to be shown to have gained substantially since the last Assembly elections, and what better way of doing it than by harping everyday on the fact that the party now had Shankersinh Waghela, who had polled 11.7 per cent in the last elections? Some 34.9 per cent of the voters had voted for the Congress in 1998 and Waghela would be importing 11.7 per cent of his own spurious Hindutva vote, making in all a grand total of 46.6 per cent which was higher than the BJP's vote share by about 2 per cent. The expectation of the media was arithmetically correct, but polit-

ically naïve. Turncoats do not carry their voters with them wherever they go; much of the baggage gets confiscated at the hustings, if the defector heads for a destination not liked by his supporters. And this is what happened to Waghela's vote; while his followers in the last elections might have liked the BJP less than him, their hostility towards the Congress has obviously been more intense than their disappointment with the BJP. His votes were repossessed by the voters to be cast in favour of the BJP, which anyway was nearer to them than the Congress.

It was not only the arithmetic of the media which went wrong. Its chemistry went awry too. The expected blending of three powerful groups — the Kshatriyas,

was seen as a person who would deliver — the people could not have been expected to support the Congress.

But then, the media could have an excuse; it laid great store by the Election Commission. Had not the EC ensured that there was a sufficient time lapse between the sight of the burning train and the polling date? And did not the Commission wait before announcing elections, till the Supreme Court gave the opinion that elections cannot be postponed indefinitely? Had not the Commission, targeting an individual leader as had never been done before, announced that it would videograph the meetings and speeches of Narendra Modi, thereby delivering the message to the electorate that here was an undesirable leader fit only for single-minded surveillance by the Commission? Did not the Commission outlaw all references to Godhra in the election campaign barely eight months after the incident though it had never objected to the exploitation of the demolition of Babri Masjid in campaign after campaign even years after its occurrence? Had not, two months after the electoral rolls were revised, another revision done by the EC, again breaking new ground? And by way of providing that little bit of delicious extras, had not the Election Commissioner heaped on the officials of Gujarat and the BJP men such sweet epithets as menials, jokers and mad men?

In all fairness to the media, one has to concede that this inspired animation of the EC, along with the beloved KHAM factor, might have benumbed the best of minds, disabling them from noticing the ground realities. And the media has, albeit with more than a tinge of obstinacy, at least reacted to the result. Two did not. Sonia Gandhi, who rushed with her comments about the Kashmir election, took four days to react to the Gujarat results; the Election Commission, which did not lose much time before praising the people, and patting itself on the back for the Kashmir polls, has not come out with any comment on the completion of the Gujarat elections. The two appear to be comrades in distress, and perhaps are entitled to their period of mourning.

(The writer is a Member of Parliament and Editor, Thuglak magazine)

OPINION

the Harijans, and the Adivasis — and their mixing with the minorities to produce a winning position for the Congress just did not occur; nor did the stand-off between Keshubhai Patel and Narendra Modi filter out the Patels, for use by the Congress. The media's physics was erroneous too; the energy generated by the Election Commission did not, as anticipated, light up the fortunes of the Congress.

So, instead of staring at Gujarat to find out what went wrong, the media would do well to look inwards and realise that it missed to notice the obvious. The Congress refuses to even acknowledge the enormity of the threat of terrorism. In Kashmir, the first thing that the Congress-PDP Government did after getting sworn in was to disband the Special Operations Group and release several militants. This would not have inspired the confidence of the people of Gujarat, who had experienced the havoc that terrorism could wreak at Godhra and in the Akshardham temple. The fact of being a border State with Pakistan could only have intensified their concern.

The BJP was seen as the only party which at least had the mind to tackle terrorism with determination. Add to this the fact that the BJP has been winning the last two elections in the State, and that Narendra Modi

20 DEC 2002

2-TIER MINISTRY SWORN IN; CONG. BOYCOTTS CEREMONY

Modi begins second stint as CM

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Gujarat

By Manas Dasgupta

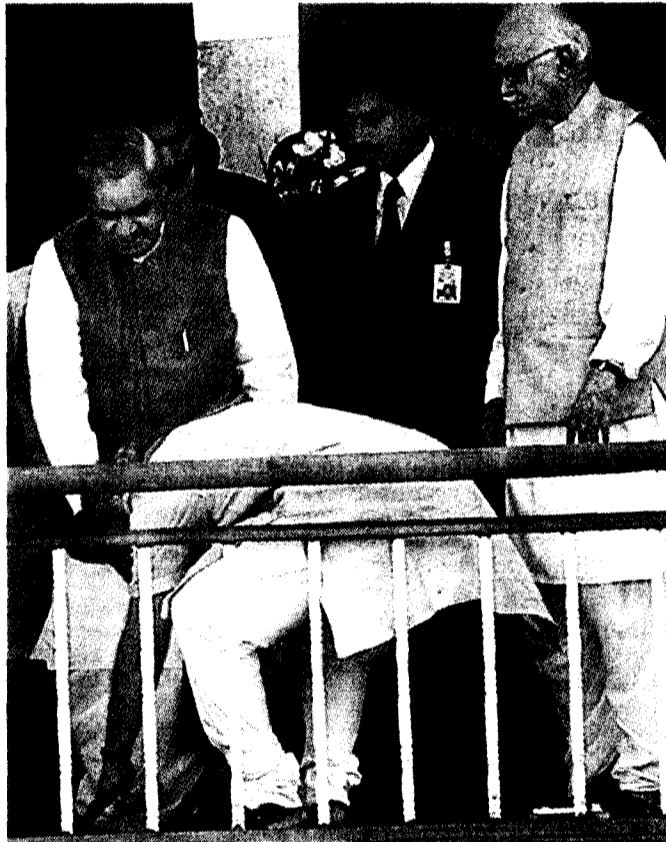
AHMEDABAD, DEC. 22. Narendra Modi began his second stint as the Gujarat Chief Minister with the swearing-in of a 16-member two-tier Ministry today in the presence of the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and a host of other dignitaries.

Besides Mr. Modi, nine Ministers of Cabinet rank and six Ministers of State took the oath of office and secrecy at the Sardar Patel sports complex here, with about a lakh saffron-clad BJP enthusiasts cheering the third consecutive victory of the party.

The Congress boycotted the ceremony protesting what it said was an extravaganza when the State was passing through a financial crisis. A Congress spokesman said crores of rupees from the State Exchequer had been squandered away in organising the "grand show".

Outside the stadium, it was total chaos with the BJP supporters elbowing their way into the complex, throwing the entire security system haywire. As thousands thronged the venue, police were unable to put everyone through the security check as planned.

At the end of the ceremony that lasted about 10 minutes, Mr. Modi flanked by the party's national president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, and the State president, Rajendrasinh Rana, took a "victory lap" in an open jeep in the stadium. Before boarding the open jeep, Mr. Modi and his



Narendra Modi seeking the blessing of the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, after he was sworn in Chief Minister in Ahmedabad on Sunday. Looking on is the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani. — PTI

Cabinet colleagues took blessings from Mr. Vajpayee, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, and a host of "sadhus and sants" invited on the occasion.

Among the dignitaries present were the Union Human Re-

source Development Minister, Murli Manohar Joshi, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, the Haryana Chief Minister, Om Prakash Chautala, the Jharkhand Chief Minister, Babulal Marandi, the party general

secretary, Arun Jaitley, and some popular Hindi film stars. The former Punjab police chief, K.P.S. Gill, who briefly served as the security adviser to Mr. Modi during the riots, was also present.

The Governor, Sunder Singh Bhandari, administered the oath of office to Mr. Modi and his 15 Ministers. It was perhaps the first occasion that the Prime Minister was present on the dais when the Governor arrived. Among the 15 Ministers sworn in, one of Cabinet rank and four Ministers of State were new faces. Vajubhai Vala, who vacated his seat to enable Mr. Modi to contest the byelection from Rajkot-II earlier this year, was rewarded with a Cabinet berth and the number two position after the Chief Minister.

Ashok Bhatt, Narottam Patel, Anandiben Patel, Kaushik Patel, I.K. Jadeja, Ramanlal Vora, and Manugubhai Patel, have served in the outgoing Modi Cabinet, while Bhupendrasinh Chudasma, chairman of the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Development Corporation, will be a new face in the Cabinet.

Among the Ministers of State, Mr. Modi has inducted his close confidant, Amit Shah, chairman of the Ahmedabad district co-operative bank, in the Cabinet. The portfolios of the Ministers are expected to be allocated at the first Cabinet meeting to be held tomorrow before Mr. Modi leaves for Delhi to attend the BJP's national executive meeting.

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MODI ELECTED, SWEARING-IN ON SUNDAY

Justice for all, says BJP

By Manas Dasgupta

GANDHINAGAR, DEC. 16. The caretaker Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, who led the BJP to an impressive victory in the Assembly elections, was today unanimously elected leader of the legislature party.

Mr. Modi's swearing-in as Chief Minister would be held on December 22, which would be attended by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the party's national president, Venkaiah Naidu, announced.

Mr. Modi's name was proposed by the Health Minister in his Cabinet, Ashok Bhatt, and seconded by six newly-elected legislators. He was declared elected by the party's national treasurer, Ramdas Aggarwal, who conducted the meeting. No other name was proposed for the post. The meeting was also attended by Mr. Naidu, the Union Textile Minister, Kashi-ram Rana, the former Chief Minister, Keshubhai Patel, the BJP national general secretary, Sanjay Joshi, and many other senior leaders.

A loud cheer and shouts of "Bharat Mata ki jai" went up in the packed Town Hall here as Mr. Aggarwal announced Mr. Modi's unanimous choice as the leader. Later, Mr. Naidu said Mr. Aggarwal and the State unit party president, Rajendrasinh Rana, would communicate the party's choice to the Governor, Sunder Singh Bhandari, requesting him to invite Mr. Modi to form a Ministry in the State. The party's decision to hold the swearing-in ceremony on Sunday would also be communicated to the Governor.

Addressing the gathering, both Mr. Modi and Mr. Naidu underlined a message for the minority communities saying that they should not feel apprehensive under the new BJP dis-



Narendra Modi, who was elected leader of the Gujarat BJP Legislature Party, being greeted by the senior BJP leader, Keshubhai Patel, in Gandhinagar on Monday. The party president, Venkaiah Naidu, looks on.

— Photo: Rajeev Bhatt

pensation. "Appeasement of none and justice for all" would be the basic principle of the Government which would treat all the five crore people of the State, "including all those who vehemently opposed the BJP in the elections" equally, they said.

Mr. Modi said the party's election manifesto would be his guideline for the future performance of the Government and would be implemented in toto to provide the people peace, happiness and security. "The people want results not mere promises; it is our responsibility to give them results with all sincerity," he said.

Both he and Mr. Naidu criticised the Congress for "refusing to accept" the people's mandate. Mr. Modi said the elections this time reminded him of the post-emergency elections in 1977 when many of the Opposition leaders felt dis-

heartened even to contest the elections because of the long, "one-sided campaign".

A similar situation was created by the Congress and other "pseudo-secularists" this time through the prolonged campaign against the BJP and by defaming the State at home and abroad. "Constructive criticism is essential in democracy, but baseless accusations were wrong," but like in 1977 the people demonstrated a "unique sense of understanding" rejecting all the "fabricated propaganda".

He asked the Congress to forget the past and act as a constructive Opposition. He also had a dig at the media which had often been carrying "misleading and fabricated stories" and were trying to find "excuses" for failing to gauge the minds of the people.

Advani's call: Page 11

Modi marches to power via Godhra

■ TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY FOR BJP ■ OVER 50% POPULAR VOTE ■ SLP MEETS TODAY TO ELECT LEADER

Statesman News Service

GANDHINAGAR, Dec. 15.—Cooking a snook at exit poll predictions, a Narendra Modi-led BJP rode the crest of the Godhra-sparked Hindu consolidation campaign that subsumed the anti-incumbency factor, and returned to power in Gujarat today. With a two-thirds majority and over 50 per cent of the popular vote.

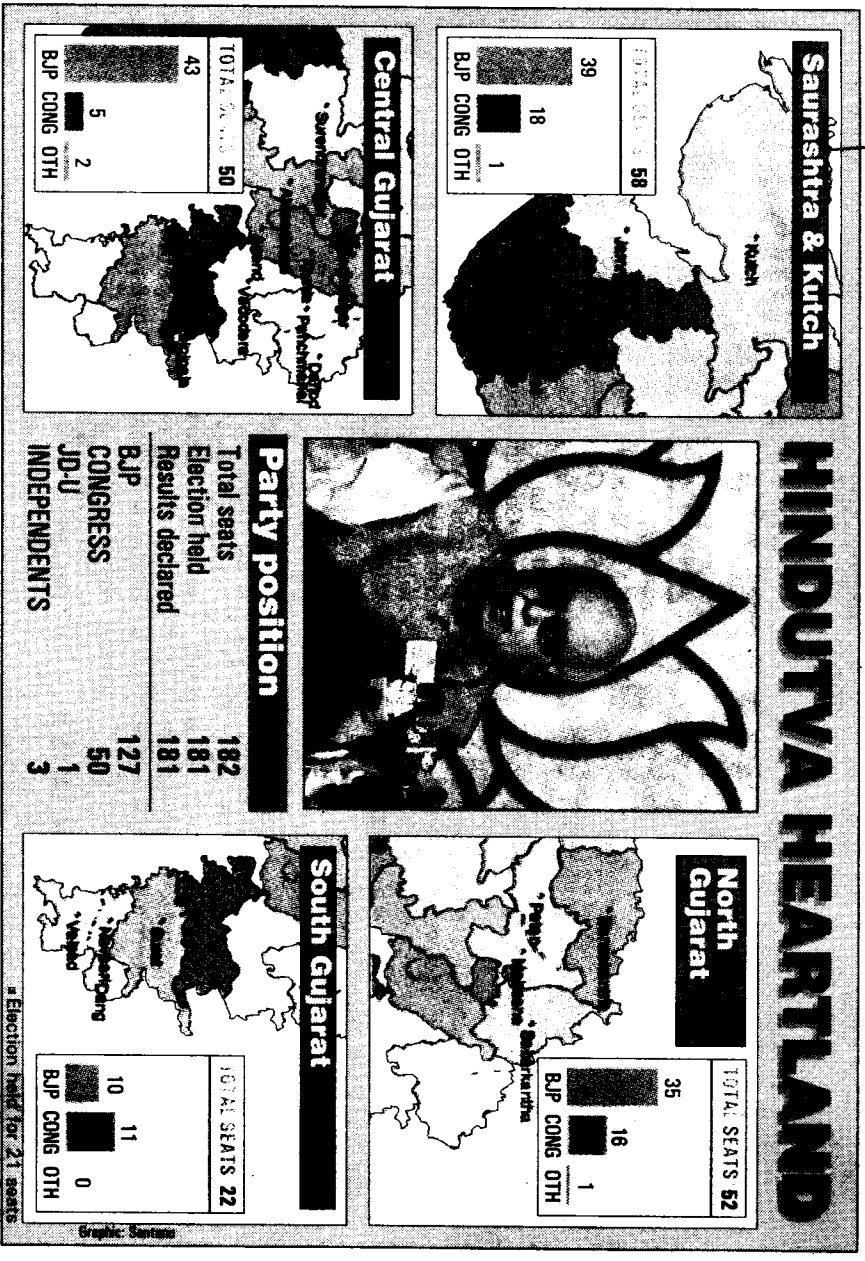
It was a hat-trick of wins for the party which won 127 seats in the 182-member Assembly, bettering its tally of 117 in the 1998 polls and 121 seats in 1995. The Congress, which won 57 seats last time, could secure only 50. The JD-U won one seat and Independents three. Election to one seat was countermanded.

The chief minister romped home and some of his Cabinet colleagues made it through as well, but the party suffered a 'shock' defeat when former chief minister and industries minister in the outgoing Cabinet Mr Suresh Mehta, the one easily identifiable moderate in Mr Narendra Modi's Cabinet, lost the Mandvi seat in Kutich. He was, in fact, one of 18 ministers in the Modi government who lost despite the party's massive win. Godhra too went to the BJP with Mr Haresh Bhatt, a former Bajrang Dal leader, winning from there.

But the story of this election began with the horrific attack on innocents at Godhra. En route, the vicious riots that were allowed to be perpetrated, the Opposition's reaction to the Godhra massacre, the Election Commission, the attack on the Akshardham Temple, the BJP's well-received attacks on Pakistan in general and General Pervez Musharraf in particular, and its



THE LOTUS BLOOMS: Mr Narendra Modi after his poll win on Sunday. — AFP



carefully orchestrated criticism of the Congress and other 'secular' parties for being soft on terror were all grist to Mr Narendra Modi's campaign mill. Last, but certainly not the least as the results of these polls have shown, the man himself did strike a chord with the majority of an electorate he worked assiduously — and eventually successfully — to 'polarise' or 'mainstream' depending on one's point of view.

Mr Shankersinh Vaghela went on television to say that his party lost because of "Hindutva, Hindutva, Hindutva" and television pundits stuck to the

Mr Modi — who is expected to be elected leader of the legislature party tomorrow — had, predictably, quite a different take on the issue. "Karnal ka kamaal (the magic of the lotus)," he insisted, was the secret of his success, refusing to be drawn into answering questions on the BJP's post-Godhra campaign, his handling of the riots and the communal polarisation in the state. "It is a victory for five crore

And while state Congress president tried and tested analysis that the areas worst-affected by riots saw the BJP to this big win (the party won in 52 out of 65 riot-hit Assembly constituencies),

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Exit polls give it to BJP

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The exit polls for Gujarat's assembly elections have predicted a simple majority for the BJP. While the Aaj Tak exit poll gives the BJP 93 to 109 seats and the Congress 72 to 88 in the 182-strong assembly, the Zee News-Taleem poll predicted 100 to 105 seats for the BJP,

and 65 to 70 to the Congress. The Zee survey - which polled 9,000 voters across 31 constituencies - shows the BJP ahead of the Congress in all the regions, including Saurashtra, where the Congress had expected to do very well.

Political observers, however, warned against taking the polls at face value, partly because the gap between the two parties is too close to call, and partly because exit polls in India have been known to go hopelessly wrong in the past.

Reflecting this caution, the mood in the BJP here was sombre rather than upbeat. A senior cabinet minister, watching the exit polls on TV as they came in this evening, said, "If we just make it, we won't gain very much from this victory. Of course, if we lose, it will damage us very much in the coming assembly elections."

Given the BJP's self-created hype of a 'Hindu wave' sweeping Gujarat to restore the state's "gaurav", a simple majority would be - as a BJP leader put it - "at least a slap on the wrist for us". A narrow win - or loss - BJP sources said would mean its attempt to return to the Hindutva agenda would have been negated. "After this, I don't think we can replicate the Gujarat experiment anywhere else," a party leader said.

Underlying this "caution", of course, is the fact that Modi has annoyed so many BJP leaders that there are mixed feelings about his winning an election at all. Asked whether a BJP victory for Modi would put him ahead of others in the party, a peer said, "If he just scrapes through, Modi will just be chief minister, nothing more," adding that the party's regional leaders in the past have never actually made it in Delhi.

For instance, Kalyan Singh, once regarded

Mr Modi rising—Listless in Maninagar



Gujarat's caretaker chief minister Narendra Modi tries to pacify a crowd protesting against the omission of their names from the voters' list in his constituency of Maninagar in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

as the party's "Hindu hriday samrat", after tangling with the central leadership, faded out; Rajasthan's Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, one of the BJP's tallest leaders, only made it to Delhi as vice president, a post-retirement job.

Wishful thinking or not on the part of those in the party who would stand to lose if Modi remains centrestage, the fact is a victory in Gujarat will mean a fourth successive term in office, setting the tone for upcoming assembly elections, particularly in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra.

In 1991, the BJP won the elections in al-

liance with Chimanbhai Patel's Janata Dal; the government collapsed when Chimanbhai broke away and formed a government with the Congress, and in 1995, the BJP won a majority on its own for the first time; when Shankersinh Vaghela broke away from the BJP, the Keshubhai Patel ministry collapsed, but in 1998, the BJP won the state back again. If the BJP loses, the shortlived euphoria over the victory in Goa would be over as its last bastion would fall.

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ADMINISTRATION GEARED FOR THURSDAY'S POLLS

High-voltage campaign ends in Gujarat

By Manas Dasgupta

GANDHINAGAR, DEC. 10. The din of electioneering ended at 5 p.m. today in Gujarat where 3.28 crore voters will go to the polls on Thursday to elect 181 representatives in the Assembly in an acid test for the BJP's 'communal card'. For the first time in the State, the polling will be entirely with the electronic voting machines.

The election to the Surat West seat has been countermanded due to the death of the BJP candidate and Minister of State for Law and Judiciary, Hemmant Chatpatwala, on Monday.

While the BJP is contesting all the 182 seats, the Congress has put up nominees for 180 seats, conceding one seat each to the CPI and the CPI(M) in the Saurashtra region.

Besides the two main rivals for power in the State, the Nationalist Congress Party, the Samata Party and the Samajwadi

Party are also contesting some seats apart from a large number of independents, accounting for the 1,000 or so candidates in the fray.

Contrary to the earlier apprehensions that the campaigning could turn out to be a bloody affair in view of the communal tension, it remained completely peaceful barring a couple of incidents of scuffle between BJP and Congress workers, and in both the cases the Congress candidates were at the receiving end.

The police, however, are not taking any chances and are making elaborate security arrangements for the polling day. Besides the local police, 167 companies of para-military forces, the State Reserve Police and the Rapid Action Force were being deployed in the State to ensure free and fair elections.

Special forces would be deployed in the sensitive and minority-dominated areas to

avoid any disturbances during the polling.

Though senior and national leaders of both the main parties, including the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, his deputy, L.K. Advani, the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, and several Congress Chief Ministers, spent considerable time addressing a large number of public meetings, the star campaigners were the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, and the State Congress president, Shankarsinh Waghela, who indulged in verbal attacks and counter-attacks. For the BJP, the campaigning had started well in advance when Mr. Modi launched his 'gaurav rath yatra' in September, but the Congress, after the initial euphoria when Mr. Waghela was appointed the State unit president, slowed down its campaign waiting for the right time to peak.

As against the BJP's high-profile campaign holding public meetings addressed by State

and national leaders — on December 9 alone the party held 80 public meetings — the Congress was relying more on personal contacts with the voters and small group meetings to erase from their minds the "communal virus", if any.

Except Mr. Vajpayee, who in his four public meetings refrained from touching upon communal issues and instead advised the people not to vote on communal lines and his deputy only making subtle references to Godhra and the post-Godhra riots, the BJP campaign otherwise followed Mr. Modi's "Godhra and Miyan Musharraf" lineharping on terrorism and the security of the people.

For the Congress, the main line of attack was the "failure" of the BJP Government to perform, highlighting the local problems such as water and power shortage, slow and tardy post-earthquake rehabilitation, price rise, and other issues and promising the voters more jobs, removal of electricity meters from the farm lands and "security against the BJP misrule".

CRPF deployed

Anjali Mody reports from New Delhi:

Over one and a half lakh jawans of the Central Reserve Police Force have been deployed in Gujarat in preparation for Thursday's Assembly elections. The Home Ministry, making this announcement, said the CRPF Inspector-General in charge of Operation, K.T.D. Singh, had been nominated as the Forces co-ordinator for the elections.

Totalling 163 companies, the Central force is spread across the State, with the largest number — 31 companies — deputed to Ahmedabad district, which saw some of the worst communal violence.

Cong. hopes to do better in Maninagar: Page 11

EC asks Gujarat to be on 'full alert'

By T. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, DEC. 5. The Election Commission today asked the Gujarat Government to put the State administration on high alert in view of the 10th anniversary of the Babri Masjid demolition tomorrow and till the Assembly elections on December 12.

A letter to this effect was sent to the Gujarat Chief Secretary after the full Commission, presided over by the Chief Election Commissioner, J.M. Lyngdoh, held a meeting in which the Deputy Commissioner, A.N. Jha, who was deputed to the State, briefed the Commission on his on-the-spot assessment of the situation.

The letter addressed by Mr. Jha said the tenor and character of the election process that was unfolding in the State was such that "it makes December 6 a very important day from the point of the State administration

maintaining law and order effectively throughout the State and ensuring that no untoward incidents occur".

The letter said that "for this purpose, the Commission desires that all organs in charge of maintenance of law and order in the State be placed on high alert and senior officials personally supervise all the arrangements that require to be put in place to achieve this end".

Further, the Commission also asked the State to maintain utmost calm tomorrow as well as the period leading to the poll day.

Curbs on VHP leaders

A PTI report from Ahmedabad said the Gujarat Election Commission had put curbs on the speeches of VHP leaders and limited their proposed 'Shauryadivas' rally to mark the 10th anniversary of the Babri Masjid demolition tomorrow, to

two places in the city, that too under strict surveillance.

The VHP has been given permission to hold religious congregation at two places — Bapunagar and Satellite areas — with restriction that no derogatory speeches against any government official, the Election Commission or contesting candidates be made by speakers so as to incite communal passion.

Tight security at shrines

NEW DELHI, DEC. 5. Thousands of armed security personnel patrolled communal hotspots and guarded shrines across the country and a red alert was sounded in Uttar Pradesh, amidst fears of terrorist assaults on shrines in Kashi, Mathura and Ayodhya, ahead of the 10th anniversary of demolition of the

Babri Masjid tomorrow coinciding with Id.

A general alert was sounded in Gujarat, rocked by months of communal violence post-Godhra, and additional security men were deployed in all sensitive areas of the State, including Ahmedabad, Mehsana and Kutch-Bhuj.

Officials apprehend violence in the twin cities of Ayodhya and Faizabad as VHP vowed to celebrate the day as "Shaurya Divas" and a Muslim body calling for observance of sorrow and ordering Muslims to close their businesses.

The U.P. Principal Secretary (Home), Pradeep Kumar told reporters in Lucknow that a high alert was sounded in Varanasi, Mathura and Ayodhya-Faizabad and authorities there were asked to maintain maximum vigil at all sensitive places.

The movement of vehicles has been banned near the Ramjanmabhoomi complex in Ayodhya, Krishna Janmabhoomi in Mathura and Vishwanath temple-Gyanvyapi mosque in Varanasi to prevent terrorists or ISI agents from planting a remote control device or a car bomb to blast the sites, Mr. Kumar said.

The strengthening of security around shrines followed the Centre's directive to States about a threat perception in the wake of terrorist attacks on Akshardham temple in Gandhinagar and Raghunath and Shiva temples in Jammu recently.

Additional security forces have been deployed around the Ramkot area where the Hanumangarhi temple and the makeshift temple are situated as also near some other temples in Ayodhya.

In Assam the Army and police have been deployed in sensitive areas, especially around religious places throughout the State, to prevent any untoward incidents, official sources said.

Security was also tightened along the border with the neighbouring countries. — PTI

EC directs Gujarat to be on high alert

TIMES NEWS NETWORK
& AGENCIES

New Delhi/Ahmedabad: Taking note of the "tenor and character" of the unfolding election process in Gujarat, the Election Commission (EC) on Thursday directed the state government to place the law and order machinery in the state on "high alert" in view of the 10th anniversary of the Babri Masjid's demolition coinciding with Id-ul-Fitr on Friday.

Though the police expect "no trouble" on Friday, they are prepared for the worst. Armed with 67 companies of paramilitary forces, Ahmedabad is now a virtual fortress.

"As you are, no doubt, aware, the tenor and character of the election process that is unfolding in the state is such that it makes December 6 a very important day from the point of the state administration maintaining law and order effectively throughout the state and ensuring that no untoward incidents occur," the EC said after a full commission meeting chaired by Chief Election Commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh.

"For this purpose, the commission desires that all organs in charge of maintenance of law and order in the state be placed on high alert and senior officials personally supervise all the arrangements that require to be put in place to achieve this end," deputy election commissioner A.N. Jha said in a letter to the state chief secretary.

The letter said the EC desired that utmost calm and decorum be maintained on this day as well as the period following it leading up to poll day. The EC move comes in

the backdrop of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's (VHP) plans to observe "Shaurya Divas" on Friday.

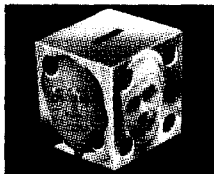
With regard to the VHP programme, following directives from the EC, steps have been taken to keep the affair low-key. Curbs have been put on the speeches of VHP leaders and their proposed "Shaurya Divas" rally, to mark the 10th anniversary of the Babri Masjid demolition, has been limited to two places in the city, under strict surveillance, additional commissioner of police Satish Sharma told reporters.

The VHP has been granted permission to hold religious congregations at two places—Bapunagar and Satellite—with the rider that "no derogatory speeches against any government official, the EC and contesting candidates be made by speakers so as to incite communal passions", Mr Sharma said.

Amidst apprehensions of trouble, normalcy returned to Naroda-Patia on Thursday, after Wednesday's bandh in protest against the "murderous" attack on VHP joint general secretary Jaideep Patel, but only just.

By sunset, families who had recently returned to their newly reconstructed homes could be seen getting ready to shift to safer minority-dominated areas like Shah-e-Alam and Juhapura.

The city police are on a "stand-to" from 7 a.m. on Friday. Joint commissioner of police (special branch) Chittaranjan Singh told TNN: "All our police stations, especially those in sensitive areas have been alerted. Paramilitary forces have been stationed at sensitive localities like Gulbarg Society."



**GUJARAT
ELECTIONS**

Divided Gujarat

It was billed as a battle for the soul of India. But half-way through a lacklustre campaign, Gujarat appears to have produced neither the anticipated frenzy nor the traditional fanfare associated with elections in the world's biggest democracy. Apart from Narendra Modi's never-ending Gaurav Yatra — which, at last count, entered its 11th phase — and his ideological "alter ego" Pravin Togadia's desperate bid to raise the temperature, the general tone and tenor remains listless. Certainly, there are differences of style and emphasis in the strategies adopted by the Congress and the BJP. The BJP's focus, notwithstanding Atalji's counsel to the contrary, is almost exclusively on Godhra. While senior dissident leader and former chief minister Keshubhai Patel has tried to raise development issues, the party led by Mr Modi and supported by the parivar seems to have decided that Hindutva alone can do the trick. In this he has received the backing of his mentor, home minister L K Advani. Indeed, at a recent election meeting in Kutch, Mr Advani lavished embarrassing praise on the caretaker chief minister. On the other hand, the lack of direction in the Congress campaign is evident, and in an atmosphere built around Hindutva, it can only hope that the anti-incumbency factor will work in its favour.

The issue of secularism and post-Godhra riots — regarded as key elements of the campaign before the poll process began — have been put on the back burner, if not altogether ignored. The wariness of the party in raising these issues in a forthright manner comes through only too clearly in the differences between its manifestos in English and Gujarati. While the English version speaks of a white paper on Godhra and justice for the victims of the post-Godhra carnage, the Gujarati version is conspicuously silent on both. Indeed, the vernacular "translation" has, in what appears to be a calculated tactical ploy, projected the post-Godhra violence as a greater loss to Hindus than the minority community. Party strategists have evidently concluded that in today's polarised Gujarat it is best to be ambiguous on secularism. The other distinctive feature of the Congress campaign is its localised character. Rather than focus on high-profile, urban-based "media events", the party is channelising its energy and resources on "voter events" — to quote party managers — at the grassroots. Whether this amounts to making a virtue of necessity remains to be seen. But with pundits divided and opinion polls forecasting diametrically opposite results, the race remains too close to call.

THE STAGE IS SET FOR A FIERCE FIGHT AT THE HUSTINGS

Sonia kicks off Gujarat campaign with a prayer



FAITHFUL: Congress president Sonia Gandhi at the Ambaji temple in Gujarat before starting her campaign in the state on Tuesday. — ET Photo

Hadod
3 DECEMBER

AFTER offering prayers at the famous Ambaji temple near Hadod, Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday launched her party's election campaign in Gujarat by accusing BJP of trying to retain power through a process of "communal divide" and by creating a terror syndrome. Arriving here from Delhi, Ms Gandhi went straight to the Ambe Mata temple and performed puja. GPCC president Shankarsinh Vaghela termed the puja as a normal event, something any visitor to the town would do.

Kicking off the campaign in the tribal-dominated Sabarkantha district bordering Rajasthan, she took on chief minister Narendra Modi and the Vajpayee government, attacking them for

their "failure" to check terrorism. She lambasted Mr Modi's Gaurav Yatra, saying that "BJP's language does not have gaurav at all."

"Hate, destruction and backwardness is not the gaurav of Gujarat, which has always set an example for the entire country," Mr Gandhi said. Taking a dig at the BJP for claiming to be the custodian of patriotism, Ms Gandhi said issues like terrorism and Pakistan concerned the country.

"It is the Centre's responsibility to deal with them. The BJP is in power at the Centre The Congress has always extended full support both inside and outside Parliament on this."

In an obvious retort to the Prime Minister's statement on the possibility of more attacks on temples, she pointed out, "If the Centre has full information why is it not taking necessary steps to counter them." — PTI

VHP leader shot at in Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad
3 DECEMBER

TWO men on motorcycles shot at and wounded Gujarat VHP general secretary Jaideep Patel from a point blank range, while he was travelling in a car near his house here on Tuesday evening.

Deputy commissioner of police S.K. Gadhvi said Mr Patel was hit in the neck and has been admitted to a private hospital. His condition is said to be serious.

He said two unidentified gunmen in their 20s, dressed in jeans and jackets, overtook Mr Patel's car when it slowed down at a speed breaker at the Naroda locality, at around 5 pm, and opened fire at him.

Bullets pierced the window of the car and hit Mr Patel, who was sitting in the rear, in his neck, he said. It appears that the assailants have used revolver-like weapons in the attack, he said.

VHP working president Ashok Singhal alleged that the murderous attack on Mr Patel was the result of a "deep-rooted conspiracy of Jehadi forces" to silence the Hindu community.

As the news of the attack spread, VHP activists rushed to the hospital. Mr Gadhvi said the situation in the area was peaceful and well under control. — PTI

Time to pay back

5 Criminalisation of politics in Gujarat 26/12

The BJP candidates in the upcoming election in Gujarat include those accused of murder, arson and rioting. Apart from Chief Minister Narendra Modi who has been indicted by the Citizen's Tribunal for masterminding the anti-Muslim pogrom that claimed well over a thousand lives earlier this year, there are others on the BJP's roll call of 182 who have actually spent time in jail as prime accused for murder. Jitu Vaghela has been given the ticket from the Shaherkotla Assembly seat which includes the area of Gomtipur, one of the worst affected in the violence in Ahmedabad. He has four cases of murder and rioting against him and is known in the area as *khalnayak* (villain). Another of his brethren is Kalubhai Maliwad who is the prime accused in one of the worst incidents of carnage. Two trucks with women and children fleeing their village were stopped and set ablaze, 70 people were killed. Maliwad is the BJP nominee for Lunawada Assembly constituency. The BJP used these elements to do their dirty work during the riots and now it is payback time. Naresh Bhatt who was until a few days ago a member of the VHP and Bajrang Dal has joined the BJP and has a ticket for the sensitive seat of Godhra. VHP goons were in the forefront of the February-March violence, and the same criminal elements are asking for their pound of flesh. And the BJP is happy to oblige.

Unlike in UP and Bihar criminals and lumpen elements did not hold much sway in the Gujarat legislature till now. Politicians had used criminals for muscle power, but had shied away from giving them a place in the sun. Thanks to Narendra Modi this is now changing. Criminalisation of politics has hit yet another state in a big way. Muscle power is not in short supply for these candidates and can be used to intimidate voters. Once elected these same criminals will do whatever they want thanks to the VIP labels attached to them. Old cases will be conveniently dropped. Politics has become the last refuge of not just scoundrels but murderers and rapists.

3 DEC 2002

THE STATESMAN

Exemplary handling of riots by Modi, says Advani

By Manas Dasgupta

9.8 Gujarat

BHUJ (KUTCH), NOV. 30. The Bharatiya Janata Party today launched its campaign for Gujarat Assembly elections with the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, seeking the people's mandate for Narendra Modi who according to him is the "most popular, competent and successful" Chief Minister.

The December 12 elections to the Assembly, Mr. Advani said, was not merely between the BJP and the Congress but was between the "people" of the State and the forces that "unnecessarily maligned and defamed" Gujaratis.

"It is for you to take revenge for the bad name the Congress brought to you nationally and internationally," Mr. Advani told a comparatively small but cheering crowd.

Speaking in the same language Mr. Modi used during his gaurav rath yatra, Mr. Advani said, "it is not only for us, the BJP and the Modi administration to reply to the baseless, issueless charges, but for the people to give a fitting reply to the 'canard' that the people of Gujarat were killers, rapists and arsonists".

Without directly referring to the Godhra train carnage and the post-Godhra riots, Mr. Advani launched a blistering attack on the Congress.

While Mr. Advani addressed rallies at Bhuj, district headquarter of earthquake-ravaged Kutch, and Rajkot, a host of other Central Ministers and BJP central leaders fanned out into different parts of the State launching simultaneous campaigns.

Among them were the party president, Venkaiah Naidu, who was in Anand, the general secretary, Arun Jaitley, in north Gujarat, and the Union Ministers, Murlidhar Joshi, in Surat, Sushma Swaraj in Ahmedabad, Uma Bharti in Rajkot and Pramod Mahajan in other parts of the Saurashtra region.

While Ms. Swaraj said that the coming elections would be a mandate to fight terrorism, Ms. Bharti said in Rajkot that Godhra could not be ignored by the BJP because the Congress had raised the issue.

Mr. Advani said that for 32 years he had been a member of Parliament, of which only for seven years he was in the Government. But even as an Opposition member he never discredited the Government, be

it of the Congress or any other party, during visits abroad.

"But the Congress leaders behaved differently, spoke more vehemently abroad than at home against the State Government and the people, painting them as devils."

Praising Mr. Modi for the "exemplary handling" of the post-Godhra riots, Mr. Advani said the Chief Minister was the "biggest sufferer of the baseless canard" of the Congress which reminded him of the Emergency days when the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, had accused the Opposition leaders of plotting to kill her and her family members.

Dares Pak.

BHUJ, NOV. 30. The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, today dared Pakistan to fight a fourth direct war with India instead of engaging in a proxy war targeting temples and innocent civilians.

Charging Islamabad with nursing a wound since the creation of Bangladesh, he threw an open challenge to Pakistan saying, "let us fight it out face to face, We have fought thrice, let there be a fourth war".

Mr. Advani said had Pakistan fought with Indian security forces he would have had no reservations. "But killing of innocent civilians by attacking temples like Akshardham and Raghunath is unacceptable". — PTI

"We were shocked to learn this in the jails but on our behalf the people then gave a fitting reply to her, removing her from power in the next elections."

He said a similar situation now prevailed in the State where the people needed to give a fitting reply to the Congress' canard.

He said he was shocked at the Congress' charges against the entire police administration that he found wrong during his visit to Bhavnagar.

Not only Muslims, even CPI (M) leaders had called on him and appreciated the police role in saving 400 Muslim children trapped in a Madrasa, but the Congress "continued to malign the entire police force".

**Haren Pandya meets
Vajpayee, Advani: Page 8**

ATL-PARTY SPLIT ON GUJARAT DATES

Modi defies PM on Godhra

SNS and Agencies

NEW DELHI/BANSKANTHA (Gujarat), Nov. 29 - Even as Narendra Modi in Gujarat defied the Prime Minister's advice not to use Godhra as a poll plank, in New Delhi Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and his party appeared split over the issue of the Prime Minister's campaign dates.

The party said that the PM will campaign on 5 and 7 December, the dates Mr Modi wanted. But a senior official said the PM's original plan - 9 and 10 December - is "more suitable" given Mr Vajpayee's schedule. The official said that 5 and 7 December "were unlikely to be fixed as the PM's campaign dates". The PM's staff was reportedly "taken by surprise that the BJP had announced the campaign dates without a confirmation from Mr Vajpayee".

Launching the tenth leg of the Gujarat Gaurav yatra today in Banskantha, Mr Modi's rhetoric appeared to make little concession for the PM's views. Mr Modi said it was "impossible to forget the killing of innocent people in Godhra". He said he did not want votes in exchange for "forgetting the Godhra incident." He also charged the Congress with being "hand in glove with the Godhra accused and terrorists."

"I want to ask the Congress why the Godhra issue should not be raised? Are

they partners in crime that they are so apprehensive," Mr Modi said. And further: "Can they forget the assassination of Indira Gandhi and forget the sight of her dead body? How can I then forget the sight of several innocent children crying besides the bodies of their dead parents at the Godhra station on 27 February."

The BJP came out strongly in defence of the chief minister's statement. The party spokesperson, Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra, said: "Now that the Congress (in its election manifesto) has promised to bring a white paper on the Godhra issue, it should not complain when the BJP too mentions Godhra." Asked about the fate of the PM's statement on there being no place for politics in discussions of the Godhra killings, Mr Malhotra said the Prime Minister had made a general remark meant for all parties. The spokesperson did not directly answer questions on whether Mr Modi had defied Mr Vajpayee and added that Mr LK Advani, had "already clarified that the BJP would reserve the right to raise Godhra if it was forced to". Mr Advani, incidentally, will kick off the BJP's poll campaign tomorrow from Rajkot.

He will also address a rally in Bhuj as a part of the party's "plan to make senior leaders address a rally in at least 40 Assembly seats on the same day".

THE STATESMAN

30 NOV 2002

Haren Pandya relents

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, NOV. 25. After preventing the party from giving nomination to his "arch enemy", Haren Pandya, the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, today filed his nomination papers for the Maninagar seat in Ahmedabad city today, the last day for filling nominations for the December 12 elections to the Assembly. His Congress rival, Yatin Oza, also filed his papers for the seat.

While the BJP will be contesting all the 182 seats in the Assembly, the Congress has put up candidates for 180 seats, leaving the Bhavnagar North for the CPI(M) and Jamnagar City to the CPI to contest as common candidates against the BJP.

Despite pressure from both the State and Central leadership of the BJP, Mr. Modi thwarted

all efforts by his former Minister of State for Revenue, Haren Pandya, to secure re-nomination for the Ellisbridge seat in the city. As it became evident late on Sunday night that Mr. Modi would not budge, Mr. Pandya opted out of the contest on the advice of some senior party leaders, paving the way for an "amicable solution" to the stand-off between him and Mr. Modi.

The State election committee of the BJP, which met twice on Sunday evening after Mr. Modi was discharged from the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital, made repeated efforts to convince him to relent. The former Chief Minister, Keshubhai Patel, Suresh Mehta, and the Union Textiles Minister, Kashiram Rana, supported Mr. Pandya's cause. Feelers were also sent from the party high command to re-

nominate Mr. Pandya. Mr. Modi, however, stuck to his stand that he himself would not contest if Mr. Pandya was given the ticket. At one stage, Mr. Patel had even threatened to withdraw from campaigning if his close confidant was not given the Ellisbridge ticket.

However, he relented under pressure from his other supporters who would be contesting on the BJP ticket.

The situation reached an impasse but Mr. Pandya was later forced to opt out of the contest on the assurance that his "nominee" would be given the ticket. Accordingly, at his recommendation, one of his strong supporters, Bhavin Sheth, a BJP member of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, was nominated for the seat.

Cong. dissidents ransack party h.q.: Page 11

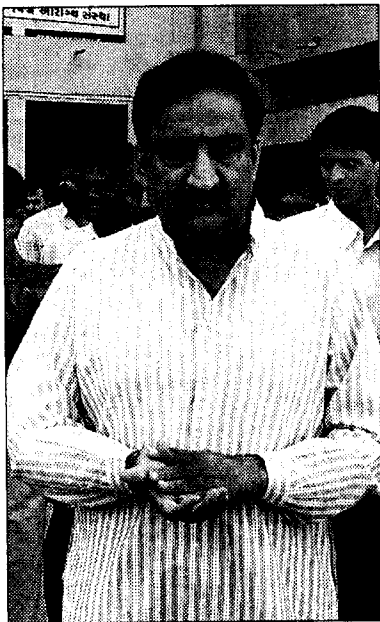
THE HINDU

26 NOV 2002

Gujarat *babus* wary of EC

SF10 29/11 9-8 Gujarat

MOHAN SAHAY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE



WILL I, WON'T I: Haren Pandya outside Gandhinagar Civil Hospital after visiting Narendra Modi. Pandya did not figure even in BJP's fourth nominees' list — AFP

NEW DELHI, Nov. 23. — Senior Gujarat bureaucrats are less willing "to do Narendra Modi's bidding" now than earlier. While the CEC, Mr JM Lyngdoh, publicly said that he has found the Gujarat police to be "professional" now, senior administrative officials say that among the reasons behind their changed behaviour "are signals from the Centre".

Senior Gujarat officials said that "bureaucrats are experts at reading political Morse codes". "And the message now is that senior government leaders in Delhi do not want the administration to fall foul of the Election Commission." "Also, we have been given to understand that sensitive situations must be tackled," a senior official in Gujarat said.

Sources said that "there is distinction" now "in Delhi's mind" between Mr Modi as an "election campaigner" and his "performance as a chief minister and head of administration." Senior officials,

MODI ADVISED MORE REST

AHMEDABAD, Nov. 23. — The condition of the ailing Gujarat caretaker chief minister Mr Narendra Modi is "stable" and reports of his angiography tests are normal, according to the doctor who carried out the test at UN Mehta Heart Institute of Civil Hospital here today. "Modi will be kept under observation for some more time and few tests will be performed in the evening", cardiologist at the Civil Hospital Dr Samir Dani said. Mr Modi was shifted from Gandhinagar Civil Hospital, where he was admitted yesterday following complaint of "extreme fatigue and body ache", to Ahmedabad Heart Institute this morning for angiography test "to rule out any heart problem". Meanwhile, former chief minister Mr Keshubhai Patel called on Mr Modi to enquire after his health. — PTI

therefore, "are acting accordingly and "treating administrative situations on merit".

An official said: "We are working under 'special' instructions that minorities, particularly those affected by communal violence should not be intimidated or prevented from voting".

The code of conduct is "an utmost priority", another officer said. "There is the question of falling foul of the EC but also attracting the censure of Delhi". "No bureaucrat wants that", he added. The chief

secretary to the state government, Mr P Subba Rao, has instructed officers "to report every detail of any disturbance that takes place in the name of electioneering."

Officials said the handling of the VHP *yatra* in Godhra was "one proof" of the changed attitude. Mr Lyngdoh said recently that both the chief secretary and the director general of police in Gujarat should look to the EC first and ministers next as long as the poll process was on. State officials said "this was more or less the case".

Bajrang Dal gets Godhra

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CONG PARLEYS

GANDHINAGAR/NEW DELHI, Nov. 23. — The BJP today nominated former Gujarat Bajrang Dal chief Mr Hareeshbhai Bhat for the Godhra seat.

Some BJP leaders feel local partymen may not accept the decision without protest. For, they consider Mr Bhat an "outsider".

Supporters of former Rajya Sabha MP Mr Gopalsinh Solanki had threatened to put up a rebel candidate if Mr Bhat was nominated from Godhra. In Delhi today, the BJP

said it would kick off its election campaign in Gujarat next Saturday. Senior party leaders including Mr LK Advani will address rallies at various places simultaneously. The BJP has described the campaign "carpet bombing".

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee is expected to launch the campaign separately in two phases. Mr Advani is scheduled to address rallies in Rajkot and Kutch. Mr M Kiah Naidu is expected to campaign in

NEW DELHI, Nov. 23. — AICC general secretary Mr Kamal Nath met Mrs Sonia Gandhi to finalise names of the remaining candidates for the Gujarat polls. The party is reportedly considering the name of Mr Yatin Ozha, former BJP leader who quit the party over differences with Mr Narendra Modi, for the Maninagar seat. The party is expected to announce the final list in Ahmedabad and Delhi simultaneously in a couple of days. — SNS

Surat. Union human resources development minister Mr Murlu Manohar Joshi will launch the campaign at Junagarh and Mrs Sushma Swaraj at Ahmedabad and Patan. Mr Pramod Mahajan will be in Jamnagar and Porbander, Mr Karia Munda in Surat village, Miss Uma Bharati in Vadodara and Anand, Mr Babulal Marandi in the Adivasi belt of Valsad and Dang. Party general secretary Mr Arun Jaitley will address rallies in Bhavnagar.

■ Criminal history:

Over 3.28 crore voters in Gujarat would now know the "criminal involvement and history" of candidates prior to exercising their franchise for the 182 Assembly constituencies going to polls on 12 December, adds PTI from Ahmedabad. "The candidate contesting the polls will have to explicitly mention the details whether in the past he has been issued any chargesheet or sentenced to imprisonment for two or more years."



READYING FOR THE SHOW: A stall for Congress campaign material in Ahmedabad. Senior Congress leaders met on Saturday to decide the party's list of candidates. — AFP

VOTE DIVIDEND

Normalcy could win Gujarat polls

IN much the same way, although in a different context, assembly elections in Gujarat could be as cathartic as they were for Jammu and Kashmir. Poll tempo has gone up an appreciable notch with the BJP and Congress releasing their first candidate lists. Time now therefore for the usual business of electioneering. But time also to consider that elections provide a real chance for Gujarat to regain normalcy. Riots followed earthquake in this economically dynamic state and Narendra Modi's Gaurav Yatra raised fears of renewed violence. Now that the Prime Minister's brilliantly timed and unambiguously worded message to the VHP has taken hold, the ball is in the BJP's court to prove that Atal Behari Vajpayee is not the only leader in the party who can see the greater good. That means a campaign that does not raise proxy issues all too easily identifiable as communally divisive. That is hard for Modi. So, the BJP must be vigilant. If, as BJP insiders are claiming, the party is in a comfortable position, even cynical calculations will indicate that the party can conduct a normal campaign, not a Modi-Togadia road show. The Congress, too, need not turn its justifiable rhetoric against Modi's handling of the riots to a pitch that the likes of the VHP can recognise and respond to. If both parties, especially the BJP, behave, Gujarat, irrespective of the result and its subsequent political repercussions, can mark a fresh beginning for a state that needs it desperately. As the Kashmir elections and the Gujarat administration's firm action against the VHP yatra have shown, it does not take much to uphold law and order.

Politicians, of course, will always need to think about elections. Gujarat is crucial for both the Congress and BJP. The former for the momentum it will receive if it wins and the latter, if it loses, for the huge setback from which it may not recover in time for the general elections. Pre-poll predictions are a psephological addiction and journalistic guesses best avoided. All that can be said now is that the Congress seems to have lost somewhat the drive it showed after appointing Shankarsinh Vaghela as state unit chief. Whether this is because of the heavy hand of Kamal Nath, an indifferent backroom operative, or because Vaghela has problems with the Congress old guard in the state is not clear. What is clear is that the Congress needs to play some catch-up in the coming weeks of campaigning and if the BJP moderates its poll rhetoric, the Congress may have to find new talking points. It goes without saying that both parties have caste minutiae as a factor in ticket distribution and poll campaign. Patels have emerged as the caste in contention between the two rivals. It would have been best of course had the parties concentrated on material and governance issues, as the Prime Minister recommended. But in Indian politics, improvement can only be incremental. Right now, Gujarat politicians can wallow in caste as long as they keep religion out of the elections.

24 NOV 2002

Pandya still to get seat

for Gujarat STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE *5-11-29/4*

NEW DELHI, Nov. 23. — Mr Haren Pandya doesn't figure in the BJP's fourth list of candidates released today. Names of candidates for the Ellisbridge constituency, from where Mr Pandya was elected last time, and three other seats were not announced. Mr Hareshbhai Bhat, ex-Bajrang Dal member and a Narendra Modi confidante, has been nominated for the Godhra seat.

Party leaders are working out a "compromise" formula to resolve the Modi-Pandya row. Mr Pandya may be nominated for Ellisbridge but after "informally" saying "sorry" to Mr Modi. This, party leaders said, would be done in a manner that "keeps both men from being unhappy". According to the formula, Mr Pandya will be asked to meet Mr Modi and "say that let bygones be bygones". Mr Pandya had reportedly spoken out against Mr Modi's handling of the Gujarat riots. He had refused to vacate Ellisbridge, a "safe" constituency by BJP calculations, for Mr Modi when he had contested the by-election after replacing Mr Keshubhai Patel as chief minister.

■ More reports on page 10

24 NOV 2002

THE STATESMAN

30 MINISTERS FIGURE IN BJP FIRST LIST

Modi gives up Rajkot, to contest from Maninagar

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 19. It is official. The Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, has abandoned his constituency, Rajkot-II, and will contest the coming Assembly elections from Maninagar, in the heart of Ahmedabad.

For several weeks now there was speculation that Mr. Modi was looking for a seat "safer" than Rajkot-II, in the heart of Saurashtra and where the influence of the former Chief Minister, Keshubhai Patel, was too strong for comfort. Moreover, the man who had given up the Rajkot-II constituency wanted it back.

It was also announced that the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, would campaign in the State along with other party heavyweights — the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the party president, Venkaiah Naidu, and several Ministers, including Jaswant Singh, Pramod Mahajan, Sushma Swaraj and Uma Bharti.

The BJP central election committee today released the first list of 144 candidates for the Gujarat elections. The names of the remaining 38 candidates are being discussed by the State election committee and will be later finalised by the party president, Venkaiah Naidu.

The party's west zone in-charge and general secretary, Arun Jaitley, has gone to Gand-



hinagar to oversee the process.

Thirty Ministers in the Modi Government have been included in the first list.

All but two have been asked to contest from their own constituencies, the exceptions being Mr. Modi and Anandiben Patel, who has been moved from Mandal to Patan.

A former Minister, Vajubhai Vala, who had vacated the Rajkot-II seat for Mr. Modi, will contest the elections from that constituency. The former Chief Minister, Suresh Mehta, will contest the Mandvi seat in Kutch.

Some Ministers who figure in the list are: Gordhanbhai Zadia (Rakhial), Ashokbhai Bhatt (Khadia), Narottambhai Patel (Choryasi), Daulatbhai Desai (Valsad), Bhupendra Lakhawala

(Baroda city) and Purshotambhai Solanki (Ghogha).

The MLA from Naroda, Mayaben Kodnani, which witnessed the worst massacres following the Godhra train carnage, has been renominated. At one time, Mr. Modi was eyeing this constituency.

The party general secretary, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, said 82 MLAs of the recently-dissolved House had been given the party ticket and 12 had been denied re-nomination.

An 'adivasi' woman, Ramila-ben Bara, one among the seven women to be nominated, will be the candidate from Khedbhramha, where she will be pitted against the Congress strongman, Amarsinh Chaudhary.

Just under 20 persons from the 'Patel' community figure in the first list, and by no means have their strongholds been exhausted.

In fact, the constituency of Keshubhai Patel, now a Rajya Sabha member, does not figure in the list.

Haren Pandya left out

UNI, PTI report:

The list did not include the name of the controversial former State Home Minister, Haren Pandya, who was removed from the Council of Ministers following alleged differences with Mr. Modi. Mr. Naqvi clar-

ified that Mr. Modi would be contesting only from one seat.

"There is no special reason for changing Mr. Modi's constituency... The decision was taken by the party's State leadership."

He claimed that Mr. Modi would have won from any constituency in the State and denied any differences among leaders of the State election committee over the selection of the candidates.

Beeline for Maninagar

With the BJP fielding Mr. Modi from Maninagar, a number of Congress aspirants are keen to contest from the seat.

The Gujarat Congress general secretary, Ashok Punjabi, faxed a letter to the party high command expressing "willingness" to contest from the same constituency, party sources said in Ahmedabad.

The Maninagar seat had been offered to Mr. Modi by the BJP MLA, Kamlesh Patel, who is also the State Transport Chairman, the State BJP chief, Rajendra-sinh Rana, said.

In the 1998 Assembly election, Mr. Patel had won the seat defeating Vijay Kella of the Congress by a margin of over 39,000 votes. The Congress has, however, not yet announced the candidate for the Maninagar seat, according to party sources.

VHP calls Advani a pseudo-secularist

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 19. The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, was today described by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders as a "pseudo-secularist" who preferred "to appease" the minorities by talking about the need for ensuring their safety, while ignoring the safety of the majority community.

Mr. Advani's reply to the adjournment motion related to the Gujarat developments has certainly not been liked by the VHP and its youth wing, the Bajrang Dal. What irked them was his categorical statement that India could never become a Hindu Rashtra or a theocratic State founded on the Hindu religion.

"He has changed his tune, you should ask him why he has done this," the VHP leader, Ashok Singhal, stated today at a press conference.

"Now Advaniji seems to be following the same path as the leaders of other parties before him. Where is the party with a difference?"

With this, the differences within the



L.K. Advani



Ashok Singhal

Sangh Parivar have taken a new turn. Every now and then, the Parivar outfits had been targeting the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, but they have almost always spared Mr. Advani, hero of the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation who traversed the length and breadth of the country during the 'rath-yatra' to spread the Hindutva ideology.

It is the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, who is the new hero of the Sangh Parivar.

"The political message that went out

from Mr. Advani's speech in Parliament was not good ('message *achcha nahin gaya*),' Mr. Singhal said, while another leader of the VHP, Vishnu Hari Dalmiya, concurred, disapproving of Mr. Advani's rejection of the Hindu Rashtra concept.

Mr. Singhal's charge was that Mr. Advani was "playing with words" and the "society at large will not like what he said." After all, his argument was, "there are 85 per cent Hindus in the country".

Separately, the Bajrang Dal convenor, Prakash Sharma, was reported by the agencies as having stated in Kanpur that Mr. Advani's remarks in Parliament amounted to an "insult to Hindus". He said: "India was a Hindu state, it is a Hindu state and it will remain a Hindu state."

The VHP leaders also made it clear that the organisation would carry on its propaganda in Gujarat through more than a hundred public meetings. Although it will be campaigning for the BJP, it will refrain from asking voters to cast their ballots in favour of the BJP for tactical purposes.

20 NOV 2002

Advani backs Atal but firm behind Modi

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, November 18

DEPUTY PRIME Minister LK Advani today sought to bury speculation of a rift with the Prime Minister by echoing Vajpayee's recent comments on Gujarat. But at the same time, he stood by Narendra Modi, implying the Chief Minister had never been the target of the Prime Minister's barbs.

Advani, replying to a debate on Gujarat in the Lok Sabha, referred to Vajpayee's appeal to all political parties for a clean election campaign. "I endorse the appeal so that the polls are concluded successfully, as had happened in the recent Jammu and Kashmir elections," Advani said.

The Deputy Prime Minister also emphasised, as Vajpayee had done, that Godhra must never be made a poll issue. But whereas Vajpayee's remark was seen as a snub to Narendra Modi — who had made Godhra virtually his only poll plank — Advani sought to absolve the Chief Minister.

Vajpayee's remarks had come just days after a vitriolic speech by Modi — peppered with references to Godhra — set off riots that killed six people, prompting the Election Commission to ban all references to the train carnage in campaign speeches.

But Advani today played down Modi's obsession with Godhra, projecting the Chief Minister as a patron of democratic values concerned mainly with development issues. To prove his point, the Deputy Prime Minister read



Atal Bihari Vajpayee arrives in Parliament on Monday.

out excerpts from a newspaper interview by Modi where he had "expressed a commitment to an educated, irrigated and electrified Gujarat".

"The BJP is set to fight the polls on developmental issues such as good governance and commitment to protect the minorities," Advani said. He assured the MPs that the Gujarat Government will ensure a free, fair and peaceful election.

That roughly concluded a seven-and-a-half-hour debate on the Gujarat situation that rarely got bitter even though the Opposition attacked the BJP for its links with hardline outfits such as the VHP and Bajrang Dal.

Later, the Opposition-sponsored adjournment motion on the Government's failure to curb communal forces in the country was rejected by a voice vote.

Related reports on Page 5

TOGADIA, ACHARYA DHARMENDRA ARRESTED, RELEASED

Godhra yatra fizzles out

Statesman News Service

GANDHINAGAR, Nov. 17. — The Gujarat government today effectively stalled the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's *Hindupat Padshahi Yatra*, by arresting Dr Pravin Togadia, international general secretary, and Acharya Dharmendra of the Margdarshak Mandal, in Ahmedabad when they tried to drive to Godhra. Both the VHP leaders, along with their supporters, were later released on bail in the evening.

The arrests at 11.30 a.m. took place as a saffron coloured jeep, named a rath, drove out of the gate of Somnath Temple in the Babu Nagar area. Less than a hundred people who had gathered there shouted slogans of "Jai Shri Ram" even as curious onlookers from the colony stood on roof tops.

The temple was swarming with policemen and the VHP leaders, along with a motley crowd of sadhus were allowed to perform *puoja* on the sandals of Swami Ramdas. The two leaders were also allowed to make brief speeches. Both talked of the establishment of a Hindu Rashtra, and Dr Togadia more specifically talked about the forthcoming elections. "We will show Sonia when the vote is cast on 12 December," he said.

Apart from a tirade against the Chief Election Commissioner, Mr JM Lyngdoh, who the VHP blames for foiling their *yatra* plans, the Prime Minister also came in for criticism. Acharya Dharmendra said Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee can alter "the diary of their hearts" only with his positive action for their cause. "In Ayodhya he cheated us," the acharya said. He said the dream of Sardar Patel was the unshackling of Ram janambhoomi, Krishna janambhoomi and Varanasi.

Dr Togadia made it clear that



Dr Pravin Togadia waves from a police van after his arrest in Ahmedabad on Sunday. — AFP (Another photograph on page 4)

Godhra will not be forgotten. He talked of "yehati atankwad" (religious terrorism) and gave a discourse on historical wrongs done to Indians by foreign conquerors.

Targeting the Prime Minister, Dr Togadia said, "we do not need a 'shakti' (powerless) 'neta' (leader). He then mentioned a list of world leaders, including the American President, who were powerful in their resolve against terrorists. Amongst the slogans raised was — "ek dhakka aur do, Pakistan tor do".

Ahmedabad remained peaceful after the arrests. No untoward incident was reported from anywhere.

There were no adverse reports from Godhra as adequate security arrangements were in place.

BJP reaction: BJP spokesman Mr Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said in New Delhi today that the state government carried out its job as directed by the EC with regard to banning the VHP *yatra*. The VHP as a cultural and religious organisation conducted its programme in a peaceful and responsible manner, he added.

Sudershan's stand: The RSS chief, Mr KS Sudershan, today claimed that the violence sparked off by the 27 February Godhra incident was a "reaction" but lasted only for a couple

of days. He was addressing a gathering of Sangh activists in New Delhi. The disturbances from 4 March onwards were triggered by "Pakistan-inspired elements" which provoked a backlash. "However, throughout the riots only the Hindus were shown as perpetrators of violence," he added.

Equating the Gujarat Congress president, former RSS activist Mr Shankersinh Vaghela with Jaichand, albeit without naming him, Mr Sudershan said in an act of betrayal of the nation he had invited a team from the USA to probe the violence in the state just as Jathchand had invited aliens to attack the country.

Opposition to raise storm over Gujarat

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 17. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee convened a meeting of senior ministers at his residence today to discuss the government's strategy for the winter session of Parliament beginning tomorrow.

The Opposition, meanwhile, indicated after a dinner meeting with the Lok Sabha Speaker that the session would be a stormy one and Gujarat would dominate the agenda on the opening day. However, all pending bills are likely to be cleared. After the dinner with the Speaker, the BJP member, Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra, said all parties had said they would ensure that the House ran smoothly and that the Opposition had demanded time for the issues to be raised by them.

However, the RJD leader, Mr Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, said the entire Opposition, including the Congress, had agreed to bring an adjournment motion on the Gujarat issue.

"Together we will bring in an adjournment motion", he said. The CPI-M has also said that it would bring in an adjournment motion on

Gujarat. A senior Congress leader said: "We are for the orderly conduct of business in the House".

The parliamentary affairs minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan, said the government was prepared for a discussion on any issue during the winter session. "The government's role is to be prepared for a discussion on any topic provided it comes under the rules and the Chair

BJP's Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra claimed all parties had agreed to ensure smooth running of the House. But RJD leader Mr Raghuvansh Prasad Singh said the Opposition would bring an adjournment motion on Gujarat

allows the discussion," he said. The meeting, chaired by Mr Vajpayee, was attended by the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr LK Advani, the finance minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, and Mr Mahajan.

During his dinner meeting, the Speaker asked party leaders about the issues they planned to raise and how they expected them to be discussed in the House.

The Speaker also called on the Vice-President and Raiya Sabha Chairman, Mr Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, to discuss issues relating to conduct of proceedings in both Houses of Parliament. The discussion mainly focussed on the smooth conduct of business in both Houses, a Lok Sabha statement said.

Another report on page 5

SECURITY TIGHTENED, VHP STICKS TO ITS GUNS

Togadia barred from entering Godhra

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, NOV. 16. A massive security blanket has been thrown in and around Godhra town, scene of the February 27 train carnage, from where the Vishwa Hindu Parishad proposes to take out its "Hindupat padshahi yatra" (vijay yatra) tomorrow, defying the ban imposed on it by the Gujarat Government at the instance of the Election Commission.

Additional police and paramilitary forces, including the State and the Central Reserve Police and the Rapid Action Force, have been rushed to Godhra from the neighbouring districts and Ahmedabad to strengthen security. Prohibitory orders have been imposed in the entire Panchmahals district.

The VHP international general secretary, Pravin Togadia, and its Margdarshak Mandal chairman, Acharya Dharmendra Maharaj, who are scheduled to lead the yatra, have been barred from entering the district.

Police have also cordoned off the ground where the VHP proposes to hold its "dharma sabha" before launching the 10-day long yatra which is to end at the Akshardham temple in Gandhinagar on December 6.

The dais put up for the meet-



A Rapid Action Force jawan takes position with a teargas shell firing unit atop a vehicle in Godhra on Saturday in view of the proposed rally by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad on Sunday.

— PTI

ing by the local VHP workers has been demolished.

Though life was apparently normal in the town with an uneasy calm prevailing in anticipation of tomorrow's development, reports said some families belonging to the minority community in adjacent rural areas had shifted to safer

places. Senior Government and police officers are meeting to finalise the administration's strategy to ensure minimum disturbance while carrying out the Election Commission's directives. It was still not clear whether the authorities would take the VHP leaders into preventive custody or allow them

to cross into the Panchmahals district or Godhra to arrest them for violating the prohibitory orders.

Acharya Maharaj, however, assured the authorities that the yatra participants would not violate any law or instigate disturbances unless the Gujarat administration, under instructions from the Chief Election Commissioner, took any "wrong steps."

The participants would peacefully court arrest if the authorities prevented them from entering the Panchmahals district or Godhra.

The decision to go ahead with the yatra schedule was taken at a meeting of the Margdarshak Mandal of the VHP here today, which was attended by the representatives of various Hindu organisations.

Announcing it in the presence of Dr. Togadia, Acharya Maharaj said that Hindus had not given "anyone" the authority to decide on their course of action. And that the yatra would stick to its programme "come what may."

The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Chief Election Commissioner, J. M. Lyngdoh, were at the receiving end of the Acharya's outburst at the media conference, convened to give the details of the yatra.

Force may be used if necessary: PM

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, NOV. 16. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, while expressing the hope that the 'Godhra crisis' would get peacefully resolved, did indicate today that the State administration would use force, if necessary, to stop the VHP from defying the ban on the 'yatra' in Gujarat. "Everybody will carry out his duty," he remarked when asked what could happen if the VHP insisted on carrying out its proposed yatra from Godhra tomorrow.

Mr. Vajpayee was interacting with the media over lunch at his residence this afternoon. He expressed the hope that the BJP would win the next month's elections in Gujarat and said that he would campaign for the party, "if he was asked to do so." He suggested that a BJP victory would be a "victory for all, including Narendra

Modi and others". And, he again repeated, that maintenance of peace and communal harmony — rather than 'Godhra' — should be issues during the campaign. Mr. Vajpayee tried to downplay the BJP's slightly different stand on the Election Commission's ban on the 'yatra'.

When it was pointed out to him that his own party was not in full agreement with his views (which are supportive of the Commission), Mr. Vajpayee enigmatically remarked that he too was not in disagreement with his party, implying that as Prime Minister he probably had to be seen as supportive of a Constitutional authority.

However, he ruled out advancing the Lok Sabha elections in case the BJP should do well in Gujarat. "Why are you against my completing the five-year term," he jokingly shot back at the questioner.

Yet to decide on SAARC meet: Page 8

'YATRA' FROM GODHRA ON SUNDAY: TOGADIA

1971
H.D.1

Gujarat Govt. to strictly implement ban order

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, NOV. 14. The stage is set for a possible confrontation between Vishwa Hindu Parishad activists and the Gujarat police, with the VHP reiterating its decision to go ahead with its 'yatra' from Godhra on Sunday and the Chief Secretary, G. Subba Rao, making it clear that the State Government will strictly follow the Election Commission's directive to stop it.

Declaring the VHP's decision to go ahead with the proposed 'Hindupat Padshahi Yatra' (Hindu sovereignty yatra), the VHP international general-secretary, Pravin Togadia, said the Chief Election Commissioner, J.M. Lyngdoh, was acting like the "president" of the Congress party and trying to "terrorise" the State bureaucracy to ensure a Congress victory in the elections.

Claiming that the Godhra Sub-Divisional Magistrate had

issued the necessary permission to the VHP to hold the meeting in Godhra on Sunday, Mr. Togadia said the VHP had not received any communication to the contrary from the State Government and there was no question of any ban on the yatra. He also released a copy of the order dated November 13 signed by the SDM, Godhra, permitting him and Acharya Dharmendra Maharaj to hold the meeting "under certain con-

ditions" in Godhra. Mr. Subba Rao, however, said he was not aware of any such permission, which might have been issued in a "routine course" and before the Election Commission's directive was received by the State Government last evening. The Additional Chief Secretary (Home), Ashok Narayan, said the SDM had been told to withdraw the permission in the light of the CEC's directive.

Mr. Rao said the State Gov-

ernment had informed all the officials concerned about the CEC's orders and if the VHP attempted to violate the ban, "the law will take its own course."

Mr. Togadia claimed that the State Government's report cited by the CEC for issuing the ban order had been deliberately twisted. The "secret" report of the Government did not suggest any such ban, but Mr. Lyngdoh was trying to mislead the people of the State for carrying out his "Congress agenda."

Mr. Togadia sought to give an assurance to the people and the authorities that the VHP yatra would be "peaceful" and not a stone would be thrown at any of the 200 meeting venues or en route. He said he was confident that the Muslims in the country would not be "instigated" by Mr. Lyngdoh and any attempt to disrupt the yatra by the pseudo-secularists would expose them to be the "supporters" of the Pakistani President.

Permission cancelled

GODHRA, NOV. 14. The Godhra district administration this evening cancelled the permission granted two days ago to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) for its November 17 yatra to be taken out from here. The Collector, Manoj Agrawal, told UNI that the VHP had been given the cancellation order in writing in view of the Election Commission's directive to this effect. He said the administration of Panchmahal district, of which Godhra is the headquarters, was in constant touch with the State Home Department and other authorities. — UNI

EC order inappropriate, says BJP chief

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, NOV. 14. The Bharatiya Janata Party today charged the Chief Election Commissioner, J.M. Lyngdoh, with playing politics and described the Commission's order suggesting a ban on the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's proposed 'Vijay yatra' in Gujarat as an attack on the fundamental right of the people to free speech and movement.

The most charitable view is that the EC's order was "inappropriate", the BJP president, Venkaiah Naidu, said today. "In a democracy, people must have the right and liberty of free speech and movement and any restriction on this is not positive," he added. The party spokesperson, Arun Jaitley, charged Mr. Lyngdoh with "entering the political thicket" even while claiming that the VHP 'yatra' was not a political but "religious activity".

For nearly 24 hours after the EC's order, the BJP was unwilling to react. The party

was depending heavily on the VHP's campaign; the VHP not being a political party, it could say and do things the BJP could not without attracting adverse notice from the EC, it was calculated. At the same time, the party did not want to attract criticism for criticising the Election Commission.

Apparently, the party decided to take up the cudgels for the VHP to help itself, believing that a "controversy" would get it more votes. "Over several weeks, there have been statements and communications from the Election Commission, but the party consciously did not join issue, for we did not want to undermine the credibility of the EC," Mr. Jaitley said. But he also made it clear that the State Government would have to comply with the EC's order and the BJP was not going to challenge it in any court. Clearly, the BJP is not about to make the mistake it did on VHP's 'shila puja' programme when the Supreme Court put the VHP and the Government on the mat.

Mr. Jaitley noted that Mr. Lyngdoh had

described those demanding early Gujarat elections as "mad", had used intemperate language against State officials and, recently, he had alleged that the former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, wanted to release terrorists in the State ahead of the elections.

He was also unhappy with Mr. Lyngdoh's description of the Gujarat situation as "nasty". He was not convinced that the VHP leaders had made provocative pronouncements on the massacres in Gujarat and on the lynching of Dalits in Haryana. He said the senior VHP leader, Praveen Togadia, was capable of "exemplary restraint".

On the reported move of the VHP to take out replicas of the burnt-out S-6 coach of the Sabarmati Express in the 'yatra', Mr. Jaitley said the Congress had used images of Indira Gandhi's body after her assassination and it had also used electronically-created visuals of the Staines' murder in election campaigns. Why did not the EC prevent that, he asked.

Defiant VHP to go ahead with yatra

HFI
15/11

for comment

Vinay Menon
Ahmedabad, November 14

THE VHP today said it will defy the Election Commission ban on its Dharm Jagran Yatra, but the Gujarat Government bowed to the poll panel and cancelled permission for the programme.

The BJP, however, strongly defended the yatra and criticised the EC ban as "inappropriate". Party chief M Venkaiah Naidu said in New Delhi: "In a democracy, people must have the right and liberty to speak and the right to reach people. Any restraint is not a positive thing."

The VHP threatened to move court if the yatra is not allowed. Its president, Praveen Togadia, told reporters, "The decision to hold a *dharmik* yatra is our right. We will definitely take it out."

Togadia said there would be no attempt to disrupt peace during the yatra, which is to kick off from Godhra on November 17. But asked what he would do if the administration blocked it, he remarked cryptically, "We will cross that bridge when we come to it."

Waving a letter of permission for the yatra, allegedly from the subdivisional magistrate of Godhra, Togadia said, "This is proof that we have been granted permission by the Gujarat Government to hold the yatra."

But the Godhra district administration said the VHP had wangled the permission by a sleight of hand. "Their application made no mention of a yatra," said Godhra District Collector Manoj Aggarwal. "It merely sought



AFP

VHP VENOM: Togadia at a news conference in Ahmedabad.

clearance to hold a *dharm sabha* at Godhra, to be attended by only two leaders — Dr Togadia and Shri Dharmendra Maharaj."

The Government has now cancelled permission for the *dharm sabha*, too.

Togadia today accused Chief Election Commissioner JM Lyngdoh of having allowed personal religious bias to cloud his official decisions. "When there were reports of the Church being active during elections in Goa and Chhattisgarh, Lyngdoh did not intervene. Why does he act only against Hindus? It would seem he is the Congress president."

He accused the Jawaharlal Nehru University of being a "secular madrasa" and said it should be shut down. "If that isn't possible, its subsidy should be cut."

Related reports on Page 4

15 NOV 2002

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

It is nothing but nasty, asserts Lyngdoh

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Ahmedabad, Nov. 12: BJP leaders today met Chief Election Commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh in Rajkot and asked what he had meant by "nasty" while describing the situation in Gujarat.

Comparing the situation in Gujarat and Jammu and Kashmir, Lyngdoh said yesterday: "The situation in Gujarat is not as dangerous as Jammu and Kashmir, but it is nasty."

Lyngdoh stuck to his stand today, saying the situation in Gujarat "is nothing but nasty". It is the only appropriate word to explain the riots, the non-availability of drinking water in some relief camps and the mudslinging match parties are engaged in in Gujarat, he asserted.

The chief election commissioner said Central paramilitary forces will be deployed in the state on November 20. The com-

mission has called Gujarat DGP K. Chakravarthi to Delhi on November 18 to give a presentation on how he plans to deploy the forces to ensure that the minority community can vote and elections are free and fair.

Candidates facing criminal charges would have to file affidavits with their nomination papers, he said. The affidavits will be available with district collectors and sold at a nominal fee.

On the VHP's proposed yatra from Godhra on November 17, the chief election commissioner said: "I have asked the state government to submit a report in a day or two." He said strict action will be taken in case of tension.

Modi respect vow

Narendra Modi said in Vadodara district today he had great respect for the poll panel and would comply with its directives.

The BJP was not interested

in a change of schedule of elections on December 12, he said.

Denying Laloo Prasad Yadav's charge of fanning communal tension in Gujarat, the caretaker chief minister asked trouble-makers to go to Bihar, "where they will be able to carry out their nefarious activities".

At a meeting at Padra, Modi warned that unless these elements stopped their activities in the state, they would be strictly dealt with.

Laloo Prasad claimed in Patna: "Modi is indulging in making inflammatory statements detrimental to peace and communal harmony in the riot-hit state.... The election commission should debar him from contesting the elections for violating the model code of conduct."

The Rashtriya Janata Dal chief said: "Modi should be put behind the bars immediately for disturbing peace and amity."

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Nov. 12: In a bid to polarise Hindu voters six days before the December 12 Gujarat elections, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad today announced it would celebrate the Babri Masjid demolition anniversary "in a big way" as "victory day".

All state units have been asked to draw up their programmes for December 6, VHP senior vice-president Acharya Giriraj Kishore said.

Two yatras will be launched from Godhra on November 17 to raise "awareness" among voters. They will end in a grand function at Ahmedabad on December 6, the tenth anniversary of the demolition.

The yatras will be led by Hindu saints and addressed, among others, by hawks Praveen Togadia, Sadhvi Ritambhara

VHP loads

Babri ammo for elections

and Acharya Dharmaendra. International working president Ashok Singhal will address the concluding function.

Kishore termed the Gujarat elections a "test case" for Hindu forces, but claimed the programme had "nothing to do" with them. The VHP had held a similar awareness campaign in Uttar Pradesh before the February polls.

He also launched a fresh offensive against J.M. Lyngdoh, charging him with adopting "double yardsticks". Taking exception to the chief election commissioner seeking a report

on the yatras, Kishore told a news agency "he (Lyngdoh) is going too far to prove his secular credentials, which has come to be identified with Hindu bashing".

"Lyngdoh gave his green signal to elections in Jammu and Kashmir despite widespread terrorist activities but here (in Gujarat) he is objecting to a mere yatra of Hindu religious leaders," he said.

"The VHP is a non-political organisation and everyone has a right to create awareness among their communities," he said, and questioned why Lyngdoh was not taking note of "political fatwas" being issued from mosques.

Kishore dismissed reports that the VHP had plans to contest 30 seats in Gujarat on BJP tickets as "mischievous and wrong propaganda and a blatant lie to malign" the outfit.

THE TELEGRAPH

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✓
CM blames minority community

Modi crosses Lyngdoh line

✓
17/11
J. Sr. Chandra (R)

BASANT RAWAT

Ahmedabad, Nov. 11: J.M. Lyngdoh read the riot act in Gujarat but Narendra Modi was not listening in Godhra.

As the chief election commissioner asked the Gujarat government to submit a report on the VHP's proposed yatra from Godhra on Sunday, the chief minister rolled into the flashpoint town saying what Lyngdoh asked politicians not to say.

Standing atop his Gaurav Rath in Godhra, Modi said members of the minority community had remained silent spectators to earlier attacks on the majority community.

"Had Muslims isolated the guilty and socially boycotted them, they would not have had to face ignominy today. They missed the opportunity. If any society gives refuge to the guilty, then criminals gain strength and it becomes difficult to control violence," the chief minister said.

He also blamed the minority community, the Congress and Pakistan for the Godhra carnage and accused them of speaking the same language.

"We cannot burn people and speak of peace by setting free white doves. We should have the courage to oppose the wrong. It is a mutual responsibility whether we are Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or Christians," Modi said.

He attributed the absence of violence in the aftermath of the

Akshardham attack to its condemnation by Muslim leaders.

He said while the lips of Congress MPs and their leader were sealed with "Italian locks" after the Godhra incident, they raised a hue and cry in Parliament over its aftermath. "Why this double standard? Why this discrimination?" Modi asked.

Modi kept up a steady stream of barbs against Sonia. At one meeting, he said: "I ask my Congress brothers if it is wrong to say *Jai Sri Ram* in this country. If you don't say it here, will we have to go to Italy to say it?"

Less than 100 km away in Anand — the birthplace of Sardar Patel — the Congress today launched its election campaign with state party chief Shankersinh Vaghela attacking Modi's "communal" agenda.

In Ahmedabad, besides seeking details of the VHP's yatra, Lyngdoh asked the state government to submit a report on the visuals of the burning Sabarmati Express that are being shown in the state.

Lyngdoh, who had asked politicians last week not to make communal speeches, told reporters that he would take a decision on the fate of the yatra after going through the report. Several individuals and representatives of NGOs and parties who met the commission had expressed fears over the yatra.

Lyngdoh said he told senior officials of the state that "we are

not going to accept a diluted stand. We have to ensure that all riot victims are given adequate opportunity and security to vote".

He said the director general of police has been asked to reach Delhi on November 18 to give a presentation on the deployment of paramilitary forces.

Lyngdoh said the international community was monitoring the state elections. "The international community is interested in the Gujarat elections as it was interested in the Jammu and Kashmir polls. So, the credibility of India's democracy is involved. The international community is going to assess these elections on the basis of whether the riot-hit people are able to exercise their franchise," he added.

Six killed in flare-up

As the political temperature soared, the fragility of peace in the state was also on display. Hours after Modi launched the ninth leg of the Gaurav Yatra, six people died in clashes in three areas. Two were killed in Kheda district, not very far from Dhakor — the launchpad of the yatra's latest phase.

Two people died in north Gujarat's Mehsana after clashes broke out when a mad dog was chased. In Ahmedabad, where the chief election commissioner is camping, a crude bomb explosion killed a man.

■ See Page 8

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8,000 spots volatile in Gujarat: EC

Vinay Menon
Gandhinagar, November 10

IN AN independent internal assessment, the Central Election Commission has identified 8000 'areas' across several villages, towns and cities of Gujarat as sensitive and prone to violence during the forthcoming Assembly elections.

Close to 90 per cent of these locations, sources say, are communally volatile spots that flared up during the recent riots.

Details of the confidential list, which contradicts the watered-down version of communal violence the Modi Government earlier gave the EC, was reportedly conveyed to the Gujarat Director General of Police K Chakravarti by the State Election Commissioner Gurcharan Singh a couple of days ago.

It includes the names of 1,100 towns and villages, apart from localities like Meghanagar in Ahmedabad and Dr Yagnik Road in Baroda that witnessed violent communal clashes.

Names of these specific areas were collated first during the

Security tightened in Godhra

SECURITY HAS been beefed up in Godhra, as Narendra Modi's Gaurav Yatra is all set to roll into the town on Monday.

Modi is scheduled to address rallies at five places in the Panchmahals district, from his mechanised chariot fitted with a hydraulic system before reaching Godhra.

Panchmahals SP Nar-simha Komar said that in addition to local police, two companies of paramilitary forces have been stationed in the district.

PTI, Ahmedabad

visit of the EC team and later by the delegation led by the Chief Election Commissioner himself in August and September.

"In fact, the specific demand for 400 additional companies from the Ministry of Home Affairs is based on these 8000 ar-

areas," confirmed a senior Government official.

The Gujarat Police has, however, sought certain clarifications from the State poll panel on the matter. DGP Chakravarti has reportedly asked the State EC to specify the exact number of polling booths in each of the 'areas' identified. "Some areas in the list have only one booth each, while others have more than one. The State Government is not clear on the criteria the EC used to choose these areas," the official said. The matter will be raised on Monday when Chakravarti and the State Chief Secretary Subba Rao, have a closed-door meeting with Chief Election Commissioner JM Lyngdoh and his team.

On its part the Gujarat police has identified 10 districts across central Gujarat, the four major commissionerates and one town—Bhavnagar—as areas that need special attention.

All 23 district superintendents and the four police commissioners across Gujarat have been asked to prepare law and order assessment on these identified spots.



PTI
Gujarat Congress president Shankersinh Vaghela with party workers in Ahmedabad on Sunday.

1 1 NOV 2002

Fresh violence in Ahmedabad

Trouble begins in Jamalpur, spills over to Gomtipur and Dani-Limda

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

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Ahmedabad: Diwali provided the spark that re-ignited communal passions in Ahmedabad as violence broke out in the communally sensitive area of Jamalpur after a petty altercation following the payment of a hotel bill on Wednesday night.

On Thursday, at least a dozen people were injured in violence which spread to the Gomtipur and Dani-Limda areas. Police had to open fire and lob tear-gas shells to bring the situation under control. The exact reason for the fresh violence at Gomtipur and Dani-Limda was **not known**, although police officials do not rule out a pattern. "As of now, we do not see any pattern. But we are trying to find out if these are mere coincidences or deliberate designs," city police commissioner K.R. Kaushik said.

Police sources said rival groups clashed at Kamdar Maidan in the Gomtipur area at about 5.45 p.m. over a petty issue and indulged in stone throwing. "Incidentally, the trouble at Gomtipur occurred at the same spot where an altercation and subsequent stone throwing had taken place on Tuesday," Mr Kaushik said.

In the Dani-Limda area near Parikshatlal Nagar, rival groups clashed "almost simultaneously".



A girl bursts into tears following an attack on her home in the Jamalpur area of Ahmedabad on Thursday.

the police said adding that groups also clashed at Shahpur.

Mr Kaushik said it was "astonishing" that the incidents had taken place in areas close to Jamalpur, where seven persons were injured on Wednesday night.

The seven were injured following stone throwing and arson after a verbal altercation over the clearing of a hotel bill near Gaekwad Haveli.

Referring to Wednesday night's arson at Jamalpur, the city police commissioner said, "It all started at an eating joint but turned provocative and communal after a petty altercation."

Additional commissioner of police Satish Verma, who had rushed to Gomtipur after reports of arson,

said, "The real reason for Thursday's violence is still unclear but it was something very petty and local." At least 30 people have been rounded up for inciting and participating in the clash at Gomtipur.

Earlier, police rounded up at least 15 persons from both communities for interrogation in connection with Wednesday night's violence at Jamalpur.

The Rapid Action Force and other central forces have been rushed to the state to ensure peace in the state during the holy month of Ramzan.

Apex court upholds poll panel's primacy

'Only Election Commission can decide on poll dates'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: In a landmark judgment on the timing of elections to a legislative assembly or the Lok Sabha, the supreme court on Monday held that fresh elections could be held within six months of the dissolution of the house and not within six months of its last sitting.

The decision is significant as the Vajpayee government and the BJP had challenged the Election Commission's decision to postpone the assembly elections in Gujarat beyond October, when six months would have elapsed since its last sitting in April.

Answering the reference made by President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam seeking the SC's opinion on Articles 174, 324 and 356—which deal with the sitting of a house, the EC's power to hold elections and the power to impose President's rule—a constitution bench said, "The elections should be held within six months from the date of dissolution of the legislative assembly."

The reference had become imperative in view of the EC's August 16 order that said the prevailing law and order situation in Gujarat did not allow it to hold elections by October.

The EC also said the Centre could impose President's rule in Gujarat in case the state government was not able to run in accordance with the constitution. Three separate but concurring judgments by Chief Justice B.N. Kirpal, Justice V.N. Khare and Justice Ashok Bhan, as well as by Justice Arijit Pasayat and Justice K.G. Balakrishnan, held that Article 174 was not meant for a dissolved house.

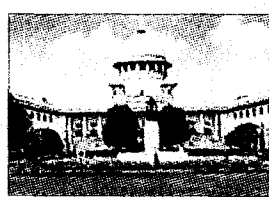
They also held that holding free and fair polls fell within the exclusive domain of the EC, and that even parliament could not interfere in this.

"Neither under the constitution nor under the Representation of the People Act has any period of limitation been prescribed for holding elections for constituting (a) legislative assembly after (the) premature dissolution of the existing one," the court said.

The court said, "In view of the scheme of the constitution and (the) RPA, the election should be held within six months from the date of dissolution of the legislative assembly."

On the EC's remark that President's rule could be imposed if elections were not held within six months of the last sitting of the assembly, the bench said as there was no mandate to hold elections within six months of the last sitting in case of a prematurely dissolved house, the question of application of Article 356 did not arise.

● BJP meet on polls, Page 7



"The power to frame the calendar or schedule for elections for constituting a legislative assembly is within the exclusive domain of the EC and such a power is not subject to any law either made by parliament or (a) state legislature"

Modi will face trial by ballot on Dec 12

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The Election Commission's on Monday announced that elections to the Gujarat assembly would be held on December 12.

November 25 will be the last date for filing nominations, and counting will take place on December 15.

By-elections will also be held on December 12 for three vacancies in the Lok Sabha—Mehsana (Gujarat), Godda (Jharkhand) and Nainital (Uttaranchal)—and five assembly seats—one each in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh and three in Rajasthan.

With the EC's announcement, the various clamps on the state authority mandated in the commission's 'model code of conduct' took effect immediately in Gujarat.

Chief Election Commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh said an intensive revision of the electoral rolls had identified about four lakhs voters displaced by the recent violence. Of these, 1.7 lakhs were traced and were included in the rolls of the constituencies where they now reside.

An untraced 2.24 lakhs voters have been retained in the rolls under a separate identification and chief electoral officers of neighbouring states are being involved in tracing them. They will be allowed to vote where they are now and the search will continue even after the announcement of the election schedule, he said.

Mr Lyngdoh said the EC would have liked the Modi government to do much more on punishing the guilty and so on, but otherwise believed it was now possible to conduct a free and fair poll.

● See Edit: Shabaash Democracy, Page 14

Gujarat polls: Cong., BJP hail SC opinion on Presidential reference

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, OCT. 28. The claims of the two major political parties, the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party, in relation to the Supreme Court's opinion on the presidential reference, seemed to be tailored to suit their own political agenda, with both parties saying they had been vindicated. The Left parties said they would prefer to react tomorrow after studying the court's "opinion" in detail.

However, it seems that on one of the main issues before the Supreme Court bench, the interpretation of Article 174 of the Constitution, the "opinion" was clearly in favour of the Congress interpretation "from the beginning", as party spokesman, Abhishek Singhvi and Kapil Sibal, MP, both emphasised.

The BJP spokesperson and general secretary, Arun Jaitley,

also admitted that on this point his party's view had not been upheld by the Court which had set a new time limit of "six months after the dissolution of an Assembly" for holding elections without attracting Article 356 related to imposition of President's Rule. The BJP had been arguing that under Article 174 there should be not more than six months' gap between one Assembly session and another and therefore, the Election Commission was bound by the Constitution to hold elections in Gujarat before the first week of October, when the six-month period ended.

However, on the "basic question" that Article 324 "does not control Article 174" Mr. Jaitley claimed "vindication" of the BJP's point of view.

Notwithstanding the claims and counterclaims, the two parties were together in welcoming

the highest court's opinion. Both were glad that there was now clarity on some grey areas in the Constitution.

The Congress spokesperson warned that the BJP should be more circumspect in the future on making adverse pronouncements on constitutional authorities like the Chief Election Commissioner. The party was referring to comments on the CEC after he visited Gujarat to make an on-the-spot study of the situation before coming to a conclusion on a feasible date for polls.

Mr. Jaitley was also happy that the Court had said law and order situations should not be a reason for delaying polls. Although it was not said as much by party leaders, the BJP did indicate that it saw in this opinion an indirect reference to the Election Commission. The EC cannot defer elections beyond

constitutional deadlines. Article 324 which gives the powers to the Commission did not give it overriding powers.

Modi welcomes ruling

PTI reports from Paddhari (Gujarat):

Welcoming the announcement of elections and Supreme Court ruling, the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, has said "conducting polls in one day indicated that situation in the State was peaceful".

He said the apex court ruling had vindicated the BJP's stand on imposing President's rule in the State.

Addressing a public meeting on the third day of seventh phase of his Gaurav Yatra, Mr. Modi said "I am extremely glad that election in the State would give an opportunity to five crore Gujaratis to elect a government of their choice".

Modi launches sixth leg of 'gaurav yatra'

By Manas Dasgupta
SHAMLAJI (NORTH GUJARAT), OCT. 19. The Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, launched the sixth leg of his "gaurav rath yatra" from the temple town of Shamlaji on the border with Rajasthan today, wooing the tribals to vote for the ruling BJP.

Apparently realising that mere rhetoric against the Congress or Pakistan may not secure votes for his party, his address incorporated the steps taken by his Government for the welfare of the tribals and assured them of more steps to solve their water and power shortage problems if voted back to power.

Among the steps he announced was setting up of an 'Ekalavya Academy' here

for training the tribal youths in athletics and other sporting events. He said the tribals were endowed with good physique and stamina, but could not shine as athletes and sportsmen for lack of opportunities and training.

The sixth leg of the yatra, which for the first time was not flagged off by a national BJP leader or Central Minister, however, received a much better response than his fifth leg at Porbandar. The sixth leg would mostly move through the tribal-dominated areas in Sabarkantha, Panchmahals, Dahod, Vadodara, Anand and Kaira districts covering 22 Assembly segments in the next three days.

Mr. Modi blamed the Congress for the water and power shortage faced by the State and said the total lack of perspe-

spective planning by the Congress Governments in the last 45 years had caused these problems. Claiming credit for bringing the Narmada water to the Sabarmati river, he again blamed the Congress for the delay in the implementation of the Narmada dam project.

Pointing out that the Congress Governments in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan were not cooperating in the rehabilitation of the affected dam, which was delaying the implementation of the Narmada project, Mr. Modi castigated the Congress leaders for their current visit to the United states.

"They would have done better if they had visited the neighbouring States and

asked their party Governments to cooperate in the implementation of the Narmada project instead of wasting their time in the U.S.," he said.

Describing the Congress as "stooges of Pakistan," Mr. Modi said Pakistan wanted to see the BJP unseated in Gujarat so that "it could implement its anti-Hindu agenda in the border State."

"It is for the people to stand guard against such evil designs of Pakistan," he added. Mr. Modi also had a dig at the media saying that his rath yatra was criticised if it did not get a good response, but no one bothered about the Congress yatras which were not attracting even a few people. "But it does not matter to me, the five crore people of Gujarat are with us," he claimed.

Modi's challenge to Musharraf

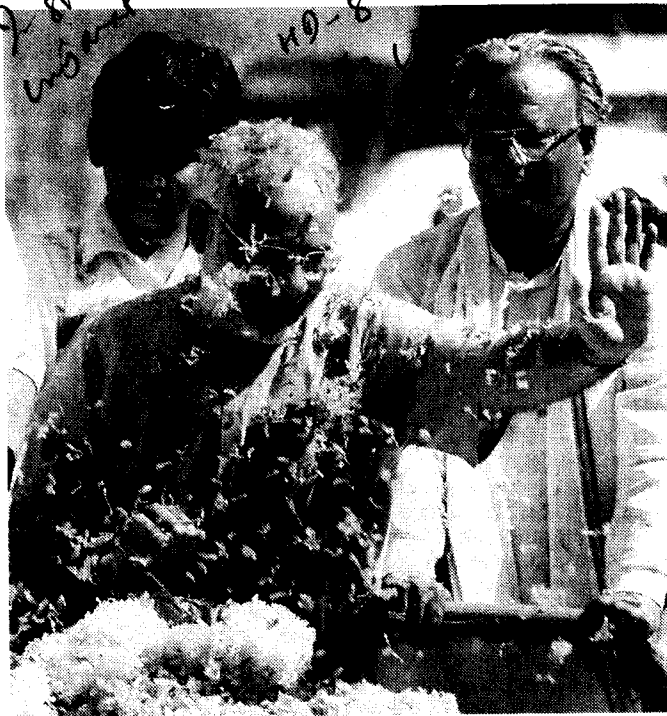
By Manas Dasgupta

AMBAJI (GUJARAT), OCT. 5. A subdued Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, rattled by a restive crowd, today described the Congress as a "leaderless, rudderless, directionless party" and advised it to "fold itself up" to make way for a more effective Opposition party.

Launching the fourth leg of his controversial 'gaurav rath yatra from the pilgrim town of Ambaji, Mr. Modi alleged that the Congress which "invited" the terrorist attack right up to the Akshardham temple had "ruined the country" while in power and even in the Opposition, it had failed to function effectively.

After accosting the Kshatriyas in Phagwel, the Scheduled Castes in Jhanjharka and tribals in Unnai in the last three legs, the fourth leg was "dedicated" to women and Mr. Modi and the Union Minister, Uma Bharti, who flagged off the rally here this afternoon, enumerated welfare measures being taken by the BJP governments at the Centre and in the State. But realising that mere enumeration of the administrative measures had failed to enthuse the women, Mr. Modi shifted to his now famous "Miyani Musharraf" version of the terrorist attack and even dared the Pakistan President to send more terrorists to Gujarat and said the people of the State would not be cowed down by terrorism.

"Even our women are enough to fight your terrorists," Mr. Modi said addressing Gen. Musharraf. The General would not be able to rest in peace even in his "graveyard" for the way



The Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, being greeted with flowers during the "Gaurav yatra" at Abu Road, 200 km from Ahmedabad, on Saturday. — AP

he was shedding the blood of the people of India.

With both his personal and the general security for the rath yatra stepped up manifold following the terrorist attack on Akshardham and busting of a Jaish-e-Mohammad gang allegedly plotting his assassination, Mr. Modi said that even if one Modi was killed "thousands of Narendra Modis" would be born to face the terrorists. "Come what may, it is our resolve that we will not rest till we finish off terrorism", he said.

Ms. Bharti, who "renamed" the State Congress president,

Shankarsinh Waghela, as "Shakuni mama" after the Mahabharata character known for creating rifts between brothers, accused the Congress of "supporting and helping" terrorists and said that more than the problems of poverty, unemployment and recession, the biggest menace facing the country was the "enemies within."

The fourth leg of the yatra, which would move through three north Gujarat districts, however, did not attract as much roadside crowds as his three earlier legs did.

Violence in Gujarat

By Manas Dasgupta

9 87 10 1

AHMEDABAD, OCT. 2. Several parts of Gujarat witnessed violence on the Gandhi Jayanti Day today forcing police to open fire in Bhavnagar and burst teargas shells in Vadodara and Piplod town of Anand district.

At least one person was injured in firing in the Prabhudas colony of Bhavnagar in the Saurashtra region, home constituency of the BJP State president, Rajendrasinh Rana, after disturbances broke out over a non-issue. Tension spread to the adjoining 'chawls' and members of both the communities indulged in stone-throwing. Seven persons were injured, which forced police to burst teargas shells. They later fired more than 15 rounds to disperse the clashing mobs.

The situation in the evening, police said, was tense but under control. The disturbances had also spread to adjoining localities from where reports of stone-throwing had been received.

In Vadodara, at least two persons were injured in the Navapura locality after disturbances broke out following heated exchange over non-payment of bills in a roadside fast food joint on Tuesday. About a dozen teargas shells were burst by police to disperse clashing mobs in Piplod after some youth beat up the members of the rival community with hockey sticks. The incident was a sequel to an old enmity but it assumed the form of communal clash. While six persons were injured, police arrested 15 persons.

Pak roots spring out of Delhi hat

SEEMAGUHAAND
ANAND SOONDAS

Sept. 27: The government today claimed a breakthrough in the investigation into the temple massacre, showing the perpetrators as Pakistanis, but refused to go on record with the information.

"Highly-placed" sources told PTI that the two slain militants who stormed the Swaminarayan temple in Gandhinagar have been identified as Mohammad Afnad Bhai from Lahore and Hafiz Yasir from Attock.

But no government official was willing to be quoted by name. An external affairs ministry spokesperson said "valuable clues" had been collected and "we are very optimistic that we will be able to come to a definite conclusion very soon".

The Delhi disclosure came a few hours after Gujarat police announced in Ahmedabad that the taxi in which the militants had reached the temple has been found and its driver and owner are being questioned. The driver of the car, Raju Thakore, is reported to have confirmed that he had ferried the "Hindi-speaking, cropped-hair" militants to the temple between 2 and 3.30 pm for Rs 120 (See chart).

Chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee said in Calcutta that the home department is probing reports that the militants might have boarded a train from Howrah. "If it is established that they had boarded any train from Howrah or any other place in Bengal, we will have to take steps to flush out extremists from the state," Bhattacharjee said.

Gujarat director general of police K. Chakravarty said the driver and the car's owner,

Mukesh Acharya, have volunteered the information. "In fact, they are helping the police in the investigations. They have not been arrested or apprehended," the officer added.

The Gujarat government had announced a reward of Rs 1 lakh for information on the two militants. But the DGP stressed that the police till now have "only information, not evidence".

He also conceded that "we cannot deny that local support had been supplied to the terrorists. The whole operation was too smooth for someone who was new to Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar and the huge temple." Chief minister Narendra Modi has been trying to debunk suggestions that the post-Godhra backlash could have provided a local foothold to the militants.

In Delhi, officials admitted in private that the disclosures of names would not be enough to convince the international community. Investigators also admitted that they have not yet identified the duo's organisation.

Usually, in such high-profile cases, the government makes a formal announcement. In this case, the news came out through a wire service probably because the information is still sketchy. "The investigations are pointing towards Pakistan, but we do not want to jump the gun. We will go public when all details are known," a senior home ministry official said.

The disclosure that the two were from Pakistan may also have something to do with the fear of a backlash against the minorities. The government had been at pains to point out that the militants were not "locals". Till late last night, intelligence agencies had been saying that it would take time to establish the identity of the two militants.

THE CAR AND THE FLEET OF TEMPLES



THE PAK 'CONNECTION'

Government sources in Delhi claimed that the two attackers have been identified as Mohammad Afnad Bhai from Lahore and Hafiz Yasir from Attock, 80 km west of Islamabad. The sources claimed that the identification was established on the basis of intercepts across the border when the commando operation was on at the temple on Tuesday night.

THE HOWRAH 'CONNECTION'

The driver and owner of the car (AFP picture on left) in which the militants reached the temple are being questioned in Gujarat.

They have "volunteered" the information that the two militants hailed the taxi from the Ahmedabad railway station. Two trains — one from Howrah and the other from Jammu — had reached the station around that time. Unconfirmed reports said the taxi driver has told the police that the two disembarked from the train from Howrah.

THE PERVEZ POTSHOT

They (India) should not blame us because what is happening in Gujarat is the fallout of the killing of thousands of Muslims there



'Fearless' Modi oils rath again

BASANT RAWAT

Ahmedabad, Sept. 27: Narendra Modi will not be stopped in his rath tracks. Undeterred by the temple strike in Gandhinagar, the BJP has decided to go ahead with the fourth phase of its Gaurav Yatra, which is to roll from Ambaji on October 5.

Despite the threat perception, the chief minister's security will not be upgraded. No additional security arrangements will be made for the fourth phase, yatra convener Jayanti Barot said.

Barot said he would not like to tighten security as it would defeat the very purpose of the yatra, meant to be a mass-con-

tact programme. Modi is a man of the masses who loves to mingle with the people, he pointed out. Security agencies had suggested that the rath be bullet-proof, but the proposal was shot down by the chief minister, Barot said.

The fourth phase of the yatra was to begin on September 28 but was postponed after the attack on the Swaminarayan temple in Gandhinagar's high-security zone on September 24.

This phase of the yatra will start from Ambaji temple in north Gujarat and cover 11 Assembly constituencies in north Gujarat and Saurashtra. Earlier enthused by the overwhelming support it received,

the BJP had announced that Modi and the Gujarat BJP chief will tour the state every week in the hi-tech Swaraj Mazda rath. However, today, Barot said this phase will last only two days — October 5 and 6 — as the Navratri festival begins on October 7. He added that the fifth phase will begin only after Dussehra (October 15).

Firebrand BJP leader Uma Bharti and party national general secretary Anita Arya are expected to be present to flag off the fourth phase of the yatra.

Even as the BJP today announced the date for the fourth phase, Gujarat Congress chief Shankersinh Vaghela attacked the ruling party, claiming that

the state intelligence department had alerted the government about a possible terrorist strike. To substantiate his claim, Vaghela circulated two "secret" documents warning the government of possible terrorist strikes after the post-Godhra violence.

The chief minister had yesterday denied that the state government was given any specific information about militants targeting Gujarat.

Tearing Modi's claim apart, Vaghela showed an official letter dated April 18, 2002, in which the intelligence department has specifically said places of worship of different communities have become vulnerable.

Modi unfazed, now talks of '625'

By Manas Dasgupta

SURAT, SEPT. 23. The Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, has sought to create yet another controversy on population explosion but insists that he is not hitting out at the minorities.

From his now infamous *hum paanch, hamare pachhis* slogan that rocked the political circles in the national capital and the National Commission for Minorities, Mr. Modi has now gone a step forward, from *pachhis* (25) to *chaso pachhis* (625). He broke the sentence to make it clear to his audience. "Five in the first generation to 25 in the second and, may be, 625 in the third."

Unlike during the Becharaji meeting in north Gujarat where Mr. Modi tried to pass on the *paanch, pachhis* remark away from the glare of the media and initially had even tried to deny the statement, during the third-leg of the "gaurav

rath yatra" through the south Gujarat region he showed his penchant for creating new controversies.

He even "alerted" the media before making the statement so that they did not miss the point and later "run for the tapes" as was the case in the Becharaji meeting. "Let the media record it carefully. There are some people who believe in increasing the population in this country. From five, they may multiply to 625 in the third generation," he said. But unlike in Becharaji, he emphasised that his comments were not specifically directed at any community, but at all those who were not practising the small family norm.

Mr. Modi, of course, also dragged the Congress in. "A country with a history of 5,000 years, India's population was 30 crores at the time of Independence in 1947. But under 50 years of the Congress rule, it went up to 100 crores. What was the

Congress up to?"

He provided the answer himself. The Congress encouraged population explosion to play its "vote bank politics."

To drive home his point, he gave the example of China. The small family norm was being encouraged there. "What is wrong in talking about population explosion that can only create more slums, more uneducated and more pick-pockets," he asked. "But the Congress is not concerned."

He also hit out at all those who raked up a controversy over his Becharaji speech. "What is wrong is wrong. My utterances on the small family norm should not have been given a communal colour."

Mr. Modi is deliberately creating controversies to stay in the limelight as he has come to believe that the more he is criticised by the media, his political opponents or even the statutory bodies, the more

the support he will garner among the people in the State. He said during his Saurashtra leg of the "rath yatra" that he "owed" the media for the large gatherings at his meetings. "It is possibly the negative image created by the media that is drawing such large crowds to my meetings," he had commented.

His remarks linking the Vadodara riots of Friday with the arrest in Lisbon of Abu Salem also sparked a controversy as Congress leaders pointed out that the riots were sparked at least a couple of hours before the arrest of Salem became public. They also criticised the supporting statement by the Vadodara Police Commissioner, Deen Dayal Tuteja, that police too were investigating on this line. Despite the criticism, Mr. Modi maintained that his Government had "information" to justify that the Vadodara riots were caused by the arrest.

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INDIA

Mumbai paralysed but peaceful

Bandh leads to Rs 1,000 cr loss for nation, Rs 130 cr for city, says industry

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Santosh Baner

Mumbai: The Shiv Sena-Vishwa Hindu Parishad's formidable bandh enforcement network in the city failed to score a perfect ten on Thursday. While the usual fear psychosis kept most people indoors, several motorists ventured out at the risk of their windcreens being smashed, office-goers braved rail rokos, some trains and flights operated and several shops remained defiantly open. Loading and unloading at the docks was also near-normal.

The nationwide strike was called by the VHP and supported by the Shiv Sena in the state to protest the gunning down of innocents at Gandhinagar's Swaminarayan temple on Tuesday. BJP M.P. Kirit Somaiya described the bandh as "total and spontaneous".

Mumbai is estimated to have lost more than a hundred crore rupees as a result of the bandh, according to industry sources. The production loss for the state was more than Rs 200 crore, while the figure for the country as a whole was more than Rs 1,000 crore, said All India Association of Industries president Vijay Kalantri.

Industry officials said that a simple protest march would have saved crores of rupees. CII estimates a loss for the city alone at between Rs 120 crore and Rs 130 crore. "Although we condemn the attack on the Akshardham temple in Gandhinagar, we strongly feel that such events should not be politicised as bandhs are not the right form of response to an act of terrorism. Our view is that a deeper understanding among cross-communities is required," said Confederation of Indian Industry's senior director Chandrajit Banerjee.

With few people making it to their offices on Thursday, trading volumes in the debt and forex markets were thin. The stock markets fared a little better and at the Bombay Stock Exchange, a block deal in ICICI Bank shares worth Rs 1,300 crore helped the exchange clock a turnover of close to Rs 2,000 crore as opposed to an average of Rs 1,000 crore.

Trains were stopped at 17 stations across the city, stones were pelted and the tyres of several BEST buses were deflated, while two political workers were injured in a clash at Jogeshwari. VHP activists demonstrated outside



Shiv Sena and VHP activists block a train at Marine Lines station in Mumbai to enforce the bandh on Thursday. (Below) Children peer out of their home in a Matunga slum to watch a rail roko in progress.

the US consulate on Thursday morning, protesting against the office being open on the day of a national bandh. The consulate closed for half an hour on the advice of the police, spokesperson Elizabeth Corwin said.

In Jogeshwari, the clash took place after the bandh-enforcers asked vegetable vendors to stop their business and an altercation followed, a senior police officer said. "The incident occurred when an appeal by some of our workers to participate in the bandh was opposed by members of a particular community," city unit BJP chief Vinod Tawde said. However, Maharashtra minister of state for home Kripashankar Singh said the incident was "not serious".

Many offices and educational institutions remained closed on Thursday. Nearly 80 per cent of routine activity was affected by the bandh, with two incidents of stone throwing on city bus-



es in Nagpur in the last 24 hours," additional director general of police (law and order) O.P. Bali said.

"There was heavy bandobast across

the state with additional security forces being deployed in nearly 20 communally sensitive zones in the state," he added. With the arrest of potential trouble-makers hours before the bandh began on Thursday morning, the police administration ensured that there was no large-scale violence or stone-throwing in Maharashtra.

"Preventive arrests were carried out to neutralise the trouble-makers. In Mumbai alone, 246 persons were arrested while 1,250 persons were put behind bars across the state," deputy chief minister Chhagan Bhujbal told newsmen at a press conference held in Mantralaya on Thursday.

The police also detained 125 persons in Mumbai for playing an active role in building tension in their areas. As many as 90 of those detained were subsequently released, Mr Bhujbal said.

● Related report, pictures on Pages 3 & 5

27 SEP 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Gujarat bandh peaceful

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24/9

Statesman News Service

GANDHINAGAR, Sept. 26. — In sharp contrast to the 28 February bandh after the Godhra incident, today's bandh called by the VHP and Shiv Sena in protest against the killings at the Swaminarayan Temple here on Tuesday by militants, remained peaceful and uneventful in Gujarat. After the Godhra incident, groups of people, wearing saffron scarves and carrying *lathis*, moved around and police remained mute spectators.

The chief minister said: "There is no communal backlash thanks to the pseudo-secularists who after the terror strikes at the Akshardham Temple refrained from using abusive language against any particular community. And this has helped me."

The Centre today said the death toll in

the temple attack was 32, including 29 civilians, one NSG commando.

The bandh in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar was total. There was a thin attendance in government offices and banks.



THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY: Two men in front of a closed shop in Daryapur, Ahmedabad. — AFP

Public transport remained off the road and most of the shopping complexes were closed. Schools were closed despite the ongoing examinations. In the industrial area here, bandh supporters forcibly closed factories.

Naroda-Patiya and Gulbarg Society areas looked like ghost towns. People, who had returned to these places, had fled the areas on Wednesday night.

Reports from other cities in the state indicated that the situation by and large was peaceful. But in Surat, two stabbing incidents were reported. One incident of violence was also reported in Ahmedabad.

Turn to page 4

Lashkar hand suspected

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Sept. 26. — Preliminary investigations and the modus operandi of the militants who attacked the Akshardham temple on Tuesday indicate that they might have belonged to the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiyaba.

A home ministry official said off the record: "Though the identity of the two militants has not been ascertained, the modus operandi of the militants bore a distinct signature of Lashkar." Their training, weapons used, the way they targeted women and children and tried to mislead investigative agencies by planting letters in their own pockets were the indicators.

Intelligence agencies and police are piecing together the leads. A hunt is on for the ambassador car used by the ultras. The sleuths are on the lookout for associates who could have given shelter and logistic support to the terrorists. A conclusion can be reached only after such an accomplice is nabbed.

27 SEP 2003

AKSHARDHAM ATTACK / VHP LEADER TALKS OF 'INVADING PAK.'

Gujarat alert against violence

By Our Special Correspondent

AHMEDABAD, SEPT. 25. The Army has been alerted to stand by for deployment in some sensitive areas of Ahmedabad and other parts of Gujarat today in view of the terrorist attack on the Akshardham temple and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's call for a "Bharat bandh" tomorrow.

The State Cabinet which met in Gandhinagar under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, also reviewed the law and order situation and decided to take all steps to prevent the recurrence of any post-Godhra violence.

The VHP international general secretary, Pravin Togadia, demanded the immediate "declaration of a war" against Pakistan and refused to guarantee that the "Bharat bandh" would not repeat the post-Godhra violence. "I am not an astrologer, I cannot guarantee what will happen tomorrow," he said but added that the VHP had appealed for a protest in a "peaceful, democratic way." There could not be violence in democracy but how the people would react to the dastardly act, "I cannot say," he said.

Unlike the "Gujarat bandh" in protest against the Godhra carnage, the ruling BJP this time has not extended its support, nor

has the Pramukhswami of the Swaminarayan sect whose temple was under the siege of the terrorists.

But the Shree Mahagujarat Sant Samiti has reacted to the attack strongly, calling the Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, "ineffective." "He merely kept talking of a final assault on the terrorist state but could not prevent the killing of Hindus at any place.

In a joint statement distributed at the VHP office, the Samiti said that Mr. Advani had no right to talk of a Ram temple since he had failed to protect Hindus after seeking votes in the name of the Ayodhya issue.

Describing the attack on Akshardham as an "attack on Hindu culture and traditions," Mr. Togadia asked all the political parties, particularly the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance, the Congress and the CPI(M) to decide once and for all whether they would remain "accessories" to more Akshardham attacks or wanted to strike at the root of terrorism. He said more Godhras and Akshardhams would be repeated all over the country if the "pseudo-secularists" did not mend their ways and stop "pampering the minorities" that encouraged them into more such acts.

Quoting Mr. Advani's statement that the

Akshardham attack was the fallout of the successful polling in Jammu and Kashmir, Mr. Togadia said the only solution to the problem was an immediate "invasion and destruction of Pakistan". Otherwise such explanations would put the Central Government leaders to "public ridicule".

He exhorted Hindus in Gujarat not to feel guilty about the post-Godhra violence under pressure from the "pseudo-secularists" and asked Hindus in the rest of the country to display "similar valour."

A large number of Muslim organisations in the State, including the Tazia Committee have strongly condemned the attack in the Akshardham temple and asked the Centre to give permission to Muslims in India to "invade and destroy all terrorist training centres across the border and even finish Pakistan."

Meanwhile, the "Gujarat bandh" call given by the Pradesh Congress in protest against the Akshardham attack evoked little response. Most of the shops and main market places remained open and the offices functioned normally. The PCC spokesman, Hasmukh Patel, however, claimed a "good response" to the call.

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20 SEP 2002

INDIA

Black Cats strike, end temple terror

TIMES NEWS NETWORK AND AGENCIES

Gandhinagar: A team of the National Security Guards on Wednesday morning gunned down the two terrorists who had stormed the Akshardham temple here, ending a 15-hour siege that Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee described as "part of a well-planned conspiracy".

Two NSG commandos were also killed during the five-hour-long operation. While one died in the shoot-out, another succumbed to his injuries in hospital. A state police commando was also killed. Four NSG commandos, a BSF jawan and six State Reserve Police personnel were injured.

Identical notes found on both militants said they belonged to the 'Tehreek-e-Kasas' and were avenging the recent communal riots. The police are still to find any other leads to this obscure organisation.

"Some days ago, our enemy spoke of Gujarat in the United Nations," deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani said without naming Gen Pervez Musharraf. "This shows they had been hatching a plan for quite some time and the attack was carried out to execute this plot," he said.

Seventy NSG commandos took part in the counter-assault, which began at about 2.35 a.m. Before storming the temple, the commandos studied a model of the shrine kept in one of the offices in the complex.

Throughout the night, the deafening sound of bullets, grenades and rocket-launchers left curious onlookers frozen. Not used to this kind of situation, they ignored the authorities' warnings to switch off headlights and vehicle engines, to keep noise levels low and to crouch as far as possible.

Ignoring warnings, volunteers braved through the security cordon to supply refreshments to the CRPF and BSF jawans taking part in the operation.

As the attacks intensified, the blasts became louder. Rumours abounded with early reports suggesting the presence of six terrorists, which later tapered down to four, then three and finally two.

By dawn, the scene of action shifted towards Gate no 7 on the west side, where the terrorists were hiding. The real action began at about 5 a.m. on Wednesday, after three powerful blasts, and by 5.45 a.m., both militants lay dead, taking the toll in the entire siege to 39.

"They had 20 to 25 Austrian-made plastic grenades and 180 rounds of ammunition—six AK-47 magazines with each terrorist," said Brigadier Raj Sita-

pathi, who led the NSG operation.

Emergency rations like chocolates, raisins and almonds were also found on the terrorists.

Brig. Sitapathi admitted it was "tough" cornering the two young militants. "The ingenuity shown while throwing grenades indicates that both militants were trained in guerilla warfare," he said.

The Prime Minister, who visited the temple during the day, said, "This type of terrorist attack will have to be ruthlessly curbed. If this is not done, it will lead to retaliation in some other form. The vengeful chain reaction has to be rooted out at any cost."

He said terrorism could not be permanently fought through violent means. "There is a need for communal amity and political consensus to create a condition to fight it," he added.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi who also visited the temple on Wednesday, said, "All necessary measures should be taken to ensure that such terrorist acts do not recur in a religious place."

Police clueless about gunmen

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Gandhinagar: A little-known outfit called Tehreek-e-Kasas Gujarat (roughly equivalent to 'Movement for Revenge in Gujarat') is believed to be behind the dastardly attack on the Akshardham temple.

Documents found in the pockets of the two terrorists who were gunned down by NSG commandos on Wednesday morning suggest that they were out to avenge the killings during the communal riots in Gujarat earlier this year.

Brigadier Raj Sitapati of the NSG, who led the operation, said two letters handwritten in black ink in Urdu had been found from the pockets of the two clean-shaven terrorists, one of whom was 20 and the other 23 years of age. The contents of the two letters were the same.

The letter, a copy of which is available with *The Times of India*, "is addressed to the thousands of conscienceless enemies of the Muslims of India".

Gujarat DG K. Chakravarthi said the police had never heard of this organisation before.

Terrorists storm Gujarat temple, gun down 27

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Gandhinagar: Terrorists gunned down at least 27 people at the Akshardham temple complex on the outskirts of the city on Tuesday evening, sending shock waves across the entire country.

Another 50 people were injured by the terrorists who are still to be identified. Although it is believed that the attackers are still holed up inside the temple, their exact fate is not known. Three hours after the attack, security forces said they had sanitised 70 per cent of the temple complex.

Officials said several persons were still trapped inside the complex and many of them could be taking shelter behind the bushes to escape the sporadic cross-fire. However, the authorities said they had no information of anyone being taken hostage.

Home secretary S. Nityanandam said, "We do not have the details yet, but we believe there are two or three terrorists inside the temple complex."

The terrorists, dressed in army fatigues and wielding automatic weapons, arrived at the temple at about 4.45 p.m. and asked for directions to the amusement park inside the complex.

An unsuspecting guard directed the terrorists towards the park.

Eye-witnesses said the terrorists lobbed bombs and opened indiscriminate fire at the high-tech exhibition hall which remains crowded throughout the day. The temple gets an average of 5,000 visitors a day. One of the bombs left a crater almost six inches deep on the marble floor.

In New Delhi, deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani said the terrorists came in an Ambassador car and entered the complex by jumping over the fence and started firing indiscriminately. They also threw hand grenades, he said.

He said two to four terrorists were involved and they were still holed up inside the complex, which has been surrounded by security forces, including CRPF and Gujarat police personnel.

Mr Advani said he had spoken to one of the priests of the temple over the phone and, according to him, the terrorists were in plain clothes.

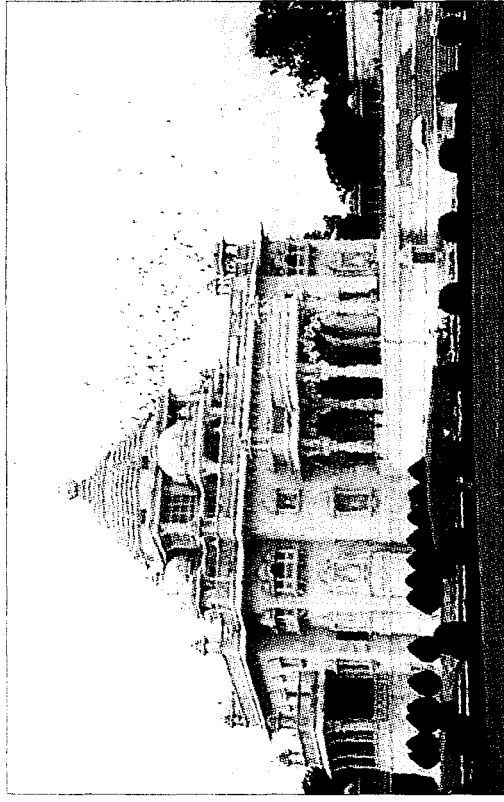
He said he had briefed both president A.P.J. Abdul Kalam and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, who is in the Maldives, on the attack. Mr Advani said he would leave for Gandhinagar soon to assess the situation.

A general alert had been sounded in Gujarat, Mr Advani said.

A contingent of the State Commando Force entered the temple complex about 45 minutes after the attack. Sounds of gunfire could be heard until late in the evening but darkness was affecting the operations. The injured have been rushed to the Gandhinagar civil hospital where tension is running high with hundreds of people pouring in. The CRPF has been deployed at the hospital to control the crowds.

Among the injured were several people from the minority community visiting the amusement park. Abdul, who received a knee injury because of a stampede, said he was still looking for his missing relatives. A Sikh boy, Randeep Chhabda, a resident of Kalol town, suffered fractures on both his hands.

Hirabhai Solanki, brother of Gujarat's fisheries minister Purushottam Solanki, said he fired at the terrorists with his private pistol when the attack started. Mr Solanki's clothes were soaked in blood as he tried to move the injured persons to safety. "I saw at least two of them but I believe there are at least three or four terrorists inside," he said.



- Gunmen number between two and four
- They came in a white Ambassador and after entering the complex, fired indiscriminately and lobbed hand grenades
- The victims include 13 men, 6 women and four children
- General alert sounded in Gujarat
- BJP blames incident on Pak frustration over J&K polls
- Congress calls for Gujarat bandh today

2 5 2003

Jaitley, Sibal collide in court over Gujarat

R. VENKATARAMAN

New Delhi, Sept. 19: It was the BJP versus the Congress in the Supreme Court today.

Continuing its arguments before the five-judge Constitution bench presided over by Chief Justice B.N. Kirpal, the BJP contended that the Election Commission had no authority to postpone elections in Gujarat. The Congress said there is no express provision in the Constitution fixing a limit within which the polls had to be conducted.

Resuming arguments for the BJP, its spokesman and former Union law minister Arun Jaitley said the "EC (Election Commission) cannot take upon itself the power of deferring the polls which is not cast upon it under Article 324 of the Constitution".

Unfettered powers to the poll panel would "defeat the scheme of the Constitution" that enjoined upon the commission mere authority for "conduct, superintendence and directing" elections and nothing beyond that, Jaitley said. He wanted the apex court to give a clear definition of Article 324, lest it led to "constitutional crises in future also".

Jaitley argued that an Assembly, after its dissolution, has to be convened within six months of its last sitting under Article 174 so that a "responsive government is in place which is accountable to the House of people. A reasonable concession would be to start the poll process within the six month time limit and conduct the election as provided under the Representation of People's Act, which gives five weeks' time to complete the entire electoral process".

Counsel and Congress Rajya Sabha member Kapil Sibal said: "If election in an extraordinary situation could not be held within the six-month time-frame, the EC had the power to defer the process beyond that limit."

Sibal pointed to the poll panel's order to argue that the elections could not be held in Gujarat due to the riots and that the revised electoral rolls were rendered "inoperable" due to the clashes.

"There is no express provision in the Constitution for holding elections within a particular time-frame as Article 174 only talked about a six-month maximum time limit between two sittings of the Assembly and not about how the polls should be conducted," Sibal said.

He supported the commission's view that President's rule was an alternative and there was nothing to fear that a "constitutional impasse" would be perpetuated. However, when Sibal said Article 356 was invoked to impose President's rule in various states more than "40 times" so far, the judges observed: "Let's not go into the political arena".

Sibal continued to contend that the presidential reference was a "motivated slant" and it should be returned unanswered. Solicitor-General Harish Salve objected to the expressions "motivated" and "slant" used about the highest constitutional authority.

The judges asked Sibal to apply restraint. "Don't take such an extreme view," the said. "Look at the document, it is signed by the highest constitutional authority. We have to proceed on the basis of that. It has been referred to us," said the chief justice.

Sibal clarified that his comments were not aimed at the office of the President and were related to the context of the questions framed and the manner in which the Centre handled the issue.

Outside the court, Sibal said: "I have not attributed any motive to the President for whom we have great regard. All that I said was that the government order is signed by a 'titular' head."

Bumpy road ahead for rath

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Ahmedabad, Sept. 19: When Narendra Modi's Gaurav Yatra rolls again on Saturday through south Gujarat, it will have to barrel through a wave of protest and negotiate a slippery stretch of scam-induced muck.

Irrked by the low power subsidy announced by the government, the hostile weavers of south Gujarat have decided to greet the Gaurav rath with protests. They are feeling let down by the Modi regime as it gave only a 10 per cent subsidy after promising 30 per cent relief in power tariff for the powerloom industry.

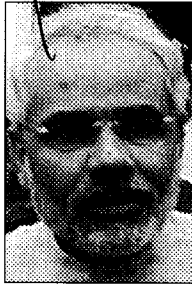
The Congress is backing the weavers to the hilt and is sure to rake up the issue more than once before the elections. The third phase of the yatra that will traverse 16 tribal-dominated segments after the kickoff from Unai's Sita Mata temple seems set to provide the Congress with another stick to beat the BJP.

Two scam-tainted conveners,

appointed by the party for this leg of the controversial "journey of pride", have become a source of acute embarrassment for Modi. State BJP secretary and co-convenor Jayanti Kevat from Navsari is one of the directors of the Navsari People's Co-operative Bank, which lost Rs 23 crore in the Home-Trade scam. A complaint has been lodged against Kevat and the other directors with Navsari police.

The other co-convenor, C.R. Patil, owes Rs 48 crore to the Diamond Jubilee Cooperative Bank. He defaulted on his payment, resulting in the bank going bust on August 26. It is under an RBI-appointed administrator now.

While the state government is contemplating legal action against Patil, Gaurav Yatra convenor Jayanti Barot said he was not aware of his dealings. "It is only after media reports that I



Modi

learnt about it," he told reporters. Barot claimed that the party had picked him three months ago as he was a loyal worker.

Patil was absolutely nonchalant about his repayment problems. He claimed that he had not committed any irregularity, any crime. "I'm a businessman

and like every businessman, I have taken a loan. I have not committed any fraud. I have not submitted forged documents. Nobody should blame me. I have just take a loan, which I will repay. That's it," he said.

However, a section in the BJP, owing loyalty to Union textile minister Kashiram Rana, south Gujarat's strongman, maintains that the persons involved in the bank scams should come clean. They should explain their conduct not only to depositors, but even to party supporters, who will otherwise lose confidence in the party.

Rana's supporters feel the BJP should also rethink the active involvement of scam-tainted party functionaries in important programmes like the Gaurav Yatra as it sends out wrong signals.

State BJP chief Rajendrasinh Rana admitting that the party is uncomfortable with the tainted conveners, but pleaded helplessness. "There is nothing we can do about it at this juncture. The issue has been brought to my notice and I will look into it. But right now, I cannot change the conveners as the yatra is to begin on Saturday and there is no time to find replacements."

Patil's, a fund-raiser for the BJP, is a rag-to-riches story — he rose from a constable in Surat police to chairman of the Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation. He is chairman of Gujarat Alkalies and Chemical Limited and owns a cable channel, Eye Witness, and a newspaper, Navgujarat Times. Besides, he has four processing units in Surat. Patil took Rs 48 crore as loan.

20 SEP 2003

Gujarat denies possessing recordings of Modi's speeches

Rush to bury tape slip

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Ahmedabad, Sept. 19: A casual remark by government spokesman Purshottam Rupala about handing over the Modi "tapes" has created confusion in the Gujarat home department.

Additional chief secretary (home) Ashok Narayan today denied that the department possessed audiotapes of Narendra Modi's controversial anti-minority speech, where he had described relief camps as breeding centres. So, there was no question of handing them over to the National Commission for Minorities, which had asked the government to submit a text of the chief minister's September 9 speech.

Rupala today said he was "misquoted". He said he had made a casual remark to a reporter and claimed that he had never said the government had the tapes. "I had only said that the government has nothing to hide. If we have the tapes we have no objection to hand them over to the National Commission for Minorities or any other agency. Since we do not have tapes, there is no question of handing them over to any agency," he said.

Yesterday, the state government, after steadfastly denying the existence of the tapes, had admitted that audiotapes of Modi's speech were in its possession. "We can make it (the tape) public. We have no intention to hide anything. If anyone asks for the tape we can give it," Rupala was quoted as saying.

The admission came close on the heels of the transfer of three top intelligence officials. They were shunted out after a television channel aired the chief minister's speech.



Nafisa Ali leads a march in New Delhi against Narendra Modi's speeches. (PTI)

"We are still verifying the authenticity of the audiotape aired by a TV channel," a top official of the home department said.

The official denied that the three senior IPS officers were transferred because of the alleged leak of the tapes as well as a sensitive internal document that had warned of the danger-

ous fallout of Modi's speech.

"The transfers were routine," the officer said. He, however, admitted that the transfer of the additional director-general of police (intelligence), R.B. Sri Kumar, who had taken charge on April 7, had come too early.

Governor Sundar Singh Bhandari today termed as "base-

less, imaginary and surprising" reports in a section of the media that he had sought videotapes of Modi's controversial speeches during the Gaurav Yatra.

The Governor also denied having met any reporters or having discussed the yatra during his visit to Shirdi in Maharashtra yesterday.

20 SEP 2003

Gujarat Govt. ready to make Modi tape public

210 21/9
AHMEDABAD, SEPT. 18. After consistently maintaining that there was no audio tape of the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi's controversial anti-minority remarks, the State Government said today that it was willing to make it public.

"We can make it (the tape) public, we have no intention to hide anything. If anyone asks for the tape we can give it," the Government spokesman, Purshottam Rupala, told presspersons. The apparent change of tact came close on the heels of the transfer of three top State intelligence officials on Tuesday

after the leak of a departmental letter warning of a "dangerous fallout" of Mr. Modi's inflammatory speeches and airing of the tape by a TV channel on Sunday.

Bhandari to review tapes

A report from Kopergaon, Maharashtra, quoted the Gujarat Governor, Sundersingh Bhandari, as saying that he had asked for the video tapes from the television channels concerned that aired Mr. Modi's speech made during the 'gaurav rath yatra'. Talking to presspersons at Shirdi, about 8 km from

here, he said that though the Opposition parties had not lodged complaints against Mr. Modi's statement, precaution should be taken by political parties and social organisations to prevent recurrence of violence.

The Godhra massacre had already maligned the image of the country, he said, and expressed hope that in future Mr. Modi would not make controversial comments against the minorities. He said rehabilitation of the quake-affected people was being carried out by the State Government and social organisations. — PTI

19 SEP 2002

THE HINDU

Modi boot for senior Gujarat IB officials

Rathin Das/Vinay Menon
Gandhinagar/New Delhi,
September 18

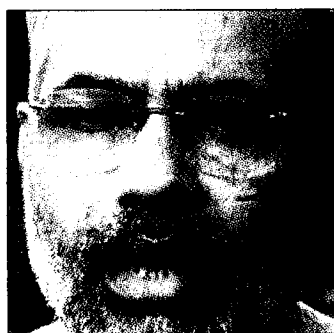
LATE ON Tuesday night, the Gujarat Government passed orders to transfer three senior officers of the State Intelligence Bureau. Additional DG Intelligence, RB Shreekumar, DIG P Radhakrishnan and SP Sanjeev Bhatt have been transferred out of their department.

Officially the transfers are routine, but the unofficial — and immediate — cause was a letter the Intelligence Bureau wrote to Additional Chief Secretary Ashok Narain last week, contradicting a statement Chief Minister Narendra Modi made to the National Commission on Minorities, where he denied having a recording of a speech he had made at Becharji on September 9, the second day of the Gaurav Yatra.

The commission had asked him for the recording after the media quoted parts of Modi's speech which were anti-Muslim. The bureau's letter said they did have a recording of the speech, which did, indeed, have anti-Muslim remarks.

But even before the letter, Shreekumar had already offended Modi. He had met Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) JM Lyngdoh when the latter was touring the State to assess its readiness for elections.

While other officials, including Chief Secretary Subba Rao and DG K Chakravarti, told Lyngdoh that the post-Godhra riots had been limited to certain pockets of the State and that "normality" had returned, Shreekumar contradicted them, saying



Narendra Modi
In hitback mode

154 of the 182 districts of Gujarat had been affected by the riots and there was still an "undercurrent of fear and tension prevalent".

He also said there was still no amicable interaction between Hindus and Muslims in the State, despite the lull in violence.

Ahmedabad Police Commissioner KR Kaushik, who had been brought in by KPS Gill, backed Shreekumar's statements to the EC.

Once the EC returned to Delhi, it named and quoted Shreekumar and Kaushik in the report it prepared on Gujarat, and said the State was not ready for early elections. The report, submitted to the SC, made a point of the fact that the two officials gave the EC the true picture, even though their seniors were toeing the Government's line.

Even before the meeting with the CEC, Shreekumar and his team had given several Intelligence reports naming VHP, Bajrang Dal and BJP activists for their roles in the riots.

See also report on Page 7

19 SEP 2003

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

At home, Modi rewinds

On last day of phase II, he plays to the crowd in BJP bastion

JANYALA SREENIVAS

BHANVAD/DWARKA,
SEPTEMBER 17

ON THE concluding day of the Gaurav Yatra's second phase, Narendra Modi made his pride more than apparent. Using the religious card to whip up sentiments, Modi went on the offensive in Rajkot and Jamnagar districts.

"During the riots, did any of you burn down shops?" he asked. A loud no came from the crowd. "Did you kill people?" Again a roar went up. "No." "Isn't there peace in your village?" Yes, said the crowd.

That was when Modi played his card: "But people in Delhi don't think so. They say you are arsonists, rapists, killers. You must reply to this."

That was enough to get crowds in every village rooting for the caretaker Chief Minister. But Modi was careful not to overstep: In Rajkot's Dhoraji, which saw violence post-Godhra, he did not ask any such question.

The VHP and Bajrang Dal had organised a major show of might in Dhoraji, which has a Congress MLA — Vithal Radadia. Though the rally attracted a 10,000-strong crowd, Muslims, half the town's 25,000 populace, stayed away.

But with the area being a BJP bastion, Modi's Yatra was received by large crowds everywhere. Modi also continued his Congress-bashing and raised the Narmada issue — but only where he was sure that the problem was not acute.

While the crowds lent an ear to the Congress- and Sonia-bashing, there was not much response to his "Narmade-Sarvade" slogan in many areas.

"We have been hearing of Narmada water since years. Still, there's no sign of it. I think we will not see it before next year," Kalubhai Goganbhai, a farmer at Jam Jodhpur said. "I think the water will take some time to reach here. It is too early to celebrate," Rasikbhai, an-



VHP and Bajrang Dal put up a major show of strength in Rajkot district. Parish Joshi

other farmer, said.

In Bhanvad, where drinking water is supplied from bores, the mood was similar. "Water will reach here in October next year. The pipelines are yet to be laid. To talk of Narmada so early..." Madar Babu, a local, said.

Earlier, in Moti Paneli, Jinnah's birthplace, on the edge of Rajkot district, Modi also took on Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf's statements at the UN General Assembly. "Standing here at the birthplace of Jinnah, I challenge Pakistan and Musharraf to malign Gujarat like this."

Modi's claims of bringing Narmada water were met with stoic silence here since it was a "dry day" in Moti Paneli which receives water once in 2 days for 15 minutes. "Modi will come and go but our problem will remain," Ajay Lakhani, a jewellery shop owner, said.

Earlier at the Junagadh Circuit House, Modi refused to answer queries on his reported anti-minority remarks at Bectahraji. "State BJP chief Rajendrasinh Rana has made enough statements on this," he said. On tapes of the speech, he said: "If there are any tapes they have been sent to Delhi."

Final rounds to go to tribals, women

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

SURAT/AHMEDABAD,
SEPTEMBER 17

FORGET KHAM. For caretaker Chief Minister Narendra Modi relies more on his KHAW — Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi and Women — vote-bank. His Gaurav Yatra covered the Kshatriya- and Dalit-dominated seats in the first two phases. Now, phases III and IV will concentrate on tribals and women.

The third leg will commence from Unai Mata temple in tribal Valsad district on September 21. And the fourth — that kicks off on September 28 from Ambaji — will woo women. The party has organised a women's convention at Ambaji that day.

The third leg will cover the entire tribal south Gujarat. On the inaugural day, a public rally will be held at Unai.

Jayanti Kevat, a convenor of the south Gujarat phase of the Yatra, says, "We are planning a big rally at Unai. One lakh people are expected."

"We are targeting people according to their areas. First

Curfew in Borsad

■ AHMEDABAD: An indefinite curfew was clamped in Borsad town of Anand district on Tuesday after clashes between two communities, police said. Curfew was imposed at 10.15 am shortly after the clashes injured six policemen, including an inspector, police said. A police party rushed to the spot after getting information that two groups were throwing stones over a trivial issue. Police burst teargas shells to disperse the mob and opened fire. The mob hurled crude bombs at policemen, injuring six of them. — PTI

in Phagvel, there were the *ba-pus*, then Dalits in the next phase and in south Gujarat, the tribals. That is the reason why we have selected interior areas," says C.R. Patil, another convenor.

BJP's Ahmedabad city unit chief Mayaben Kodnani said the Ambaji function "will be flagged off by BJP national chief of women's cell Kanta Nalavade".

Now Modi 'shows off' Muslim

But the precious few are kept far away from media at Mendarda

JANYALA SREENIVAS
JUNAGADH, SEPTEMBER 16

WHEN Chief Minister Narendra Modi finally decides he needs, or at least needs to show, some Muslim support, guess what he does? He gets a local Muslim body to welcome his Gaurav Yatra at Mendarda town, gets five of its members to shave their heads and paint the BJP symbol on them, invites media to watch this and when they do, to refuse to let them question the men.

Not surprisingly, few were fooled by the drama at Mendarda, near Junagadh, yesterday. The Sunni Muslim Samiti had organised a welcome programme for Modi and five of its members stood by, their heads shaved, with freshly painted lotuses gleaming on the pates to show "solidarity with the BJP". Haroon Mohammed, Gulam Haasan, Haji Mohammed, Musabbhai Mohammed and Mo-



Sunni Muslim Samiti members who met the Yatra with freshly painted lotus symbols on heads. Express

ammed Sultan Painter said they were supporters of BJP local MLA Devanand Solanki and thus welcomed the Yatra. "We have nothing to do with what happened at Godhra and later. We are living here safely for several decades and even during the riots, we had no problems. We feel safe and we owe this to the MLA," Mohammed said.

An hour before the Yatra arrived, the BJP media cell had called up newspapers and told them about the unique welcome. Another giveaway was the fresh

paint on the shaved heads of the five. And when the reporters started questioning the men, they were led away by BJP functionaries. Even at the public meeting at Mendarda where they were called on stage, they were not allowed to talk to the media. Few were fooled, including local Muslims who said the whole show was stage-managed. "Muslims may be safe here, but we don't support Modi. We think he is responsible for violence in other parts. We were not aware of the programme otherwise we

allegations post-Godhra.

President, pleas fail to get relief for 14-year-old

9.9.2002

President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam himself ordered Collectorate officials to look into Javed Ismail Sheikh's claim for compensation on August 12. Yet, a month later, nothing has happened. The 14-year-old had lost three family members in the February 28 Naroda-Patiya massacre. After numerous pleas to the Collectorate and an NHRC team failed to work, he finally approached Kalam. The President directed the collectorate to look into his claim and arrange for his education.

Since then, Javed and his uncle, Khalid Noor Mohammad Sheikh, have visited the collectorate a dozen times. They were always told to come back later. "They refused to compensate because I failed to identify the scorched bodies," Javed said. Additional Collector Gaurav Prajapati said: "The bodies of his father and sister could not be identified. On September 14, a committee decided he would be paid. He will receive the cheque at the earliest."



PAULAK NANDI

✓
CONGSMEN WEAR ITALIAN SPECTACLES, MISS GUJARAT'S PRIDE'

Modi uses yatra to attack Sonia

Anil Rana in Phagvel

Sept. 8. — Mr Narendra Modi today said the Gaurav yatra would wash away the *daag* (blot) on Gujarat's pride. Speaking at a function marking the beginning of the yatra here, the chief minister harped on his pet theme — "conspiracy to tarnish Gujarat's image".

He referred to Mahatma Gandhi for the first time and took a dig at "Italy ki beti". Mr Modi's references till now generally stopped at Sardar Patel. Today, while referring to state's pride, he asked: "How can Gujarat forget that this was the birthplace of Gandhiji and Sardar Patel."

Quoting Gandhiji in his own way, Mr Modi said the Mahatma had wanted the Whites to leave the country. "You (Congressmen) have got Italy ki beti, you should be ashamed." He hit back at the Congressmen who called the Gaurav yatra as "sharam yatra". He said: "The Congress party should be ashamed of dividing the country. You could not save Mahatma Gandhi and two Prime Ministers... That Kashmir was divided is a matter of same for the Congress."

Throwing a challenge to Mrs Sonia Gandhi, the chief minister said "Italy ki beti" should come to Gujarat and say what she has to against Gujarat's pride. Congressmen couldn't see "Gujarat's gaurav" because "you are wearing

Italian spectacles".

"Wherever the Congress leaves, the BJP will fill the place," Mr Modi said, referring to the trip of Mr Shankersinh Vaghela and Congressmen to the same site last week. The Congress' "dream of getting to Gandhinagar from Godhra will not be fulfilled", Mr Modi told thousands of party workers. He took a jibe at those who garlanded and felicitated those held

The chief minister said 'Italy ki beti' should come to Gujarat and say what she has to against the state's pride

for the Godhra massacre.

Elaborating on his conspiracy theory, he started with the rumours about plague in Surat some years ago. Then the environment lobby tried its best to stop the Narmada dam project on the grounds of ecological degradation and tribals' displacement. "What is this thinking", he wondered. He also mentioned the charge that the people of Gujarat were stealing the relief material for earthquake victims. "There was no sympathy for the dead, instead Italy ki beti described the Gujaratis as *chor* (thieves) who stole biscuits and Bisleri bottles", Mr Modi said. "I warn you, now there will be no

more tolerance; the Gujaratis want to live with pride and efforts to denigrate the state will be met with force."

For Mr Modi the "conspiracy" included the article of "a Narmada Virodhi behn" who said that a relative of Ehsan Jaffri, the Congress MP killed in the riots, was repeatedly raped, and the injustices which the "Nehru parivar" had done to Sardar Patel and Morarji Desai, both Gujaratis.

When the Jagannath yatra went off peacefully, the Congressmen sought "Madam's" help. Referring to Mrs Gandhi's poser — "which political party does Jagannath belong to" — Mr Modi said: "She does not even know that Jagannath is a God and not a BJP worker."

During the Congress president's trip to Porbandar "she referred to Gandhiji three times and to Godse 13 times. She does not know that Porbandar is Gandhiji's birthplace".

Mr Modi thanked Mrs Gandhi for getting the Gaurav yatra postponed in July. "We now have a good monsoon and there is Narmada water in the Sabarmati."

On cow-slaughter, Mr Modi asked whether Mrs Gandhi was ready to become a follower of Bhatiji Maharaj and ban cow-slaughter in Congress-run states.

Appealing to BJP workers to remain calm, despite being provoked by Congressmen, Mr Modi said what was important was not the chief minister's chair or the BJP, but "Gujarat's pride".

GAURAV RATH YATRA / YET ANOTHER POSTPONEMENT

Belligerent mood in Waghela camp

By Manas Dasgupta

PHAGWEL (GUJARAT), SEPT. 3. Even as the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi's "Gaurav rath yatra" was further postponed by one more day, the Pradesh Congress president, Shankarsinh Waghela, showed his belligerent mood paving the way for a possible confrontation with the ruling party workers.

Breaking his 24-hour fast outside the Bhathiji Maharaj temple in Phagwel village this afternoon, Mr. Waghela called upon his Kshatriya followers not to allow the BJP leaders to enter the temple and "reject" Mr. Modi's rath yatra.

Judging from the mood of the "Bhathi Sainiks" and their unflinching loyalty to Mr. Waghela, a confrontation with the BJP workers can still not be ruled out if they try to enter the Bhathiji temple for a "darshan" before Mr. Modi launched his rath yatra.

Mr. Modi, who was originally scheduled to launch the rath yatra from the same temple today, had earlier postponed it till September 7 to avoid a confrontation with the supporters of Mr. Waghela, who had his religious ceremony of "Dhwajaroohan" in the temple fixed for the day.

The state BJP president, Rajendrasinh Rana, said today that the rath yatra had been further postponed by a day to September 8 because Saturday was the day of "Amavasya" (new moon day) and was also

the last day of the auspicious "Shravan" month when most of the villages in the region organise "melas" and other religious ceremonies.

Though the BJP had planned to start the rath yatra from the outskirts of Phagwel and send only a small group of leaders to the Bhathiji temple for a "darshan" before its launch, Mr. Waghela's call to his supporters is likely to create a situation of confrontation if Mr. Modi tries to enter the temple. Any attempt to force his way to the temple with the help of the security forces will not be appreciated by the large Kshatriya community who regard Bhathiji Maharaj as the presiding deity.

Mr. Waghela, who began his 24-hour to-ken fast on Monday in protest against the alleged "police repression" on his supporters in Phagwel and surrounding villages, broke his fast and participated in the "Dhwajaroohan" ceremony at the temple before addressing a huge gathering of people who converged from various parts of central and north Gujarat districts on the occasion.

Launching a frontal attack on the BJP, Mr. Waghela referred to the reported move by the ruling party to open some 60,000 slaughter houses in the country at a cost of about Rs. 2,000 crores and said the party which begged for votes in the name of "Hindutva" had neither any touch with the religion nor had remained "Gaubhakta"

(respect to cows). "These people have no right to enter any religious place," he said and called upon his supporters not to allow the BJP leaders to enter the temple of Bhathiji, who sacrificed his life for protecting cows. If the Congress comes to power, "we will not allow opening of a single slaughter house in the State," he declared.

Ridiculing the BJP, Mr. Waghela said memorials were constructed for those who sacrificed their lives for a good cause.

"Have you ever seen a memorial of any BJP leader", he asked. He said the BJP was "cheating people" in the name of religion but now it was going beyond people's tolerance. The BJP Government working for breaking the society was a "shame" for the entire country, he said and asked the people to take a "pledge" to remove such a Government.

Reiterating his demand that Mr. Modi's "gaurav rath yatra" — which he described as "kalank (shame) rath yatra," — should be cancelled altogether, Mr. Waghela also demanded the removal of the caretaker Ministry and imposition of President's rule in the State.

The BJP Government had failed to generate additional employment or add to power generation. Mr Waghela also promised Rs. 900-a-month pension scheme for widows and several employment-generation schemes if the Congress was voted to power in the State.

SUPREME COURT CURBS AMBIT OF REFERENCE

EC for year-end Gujarat polls

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Sept. 2. — The Election Commission has clarified that it would hold the Assembly polls in Gujarat in November-December, the Supreme Court (coram, Kirpal, CJ, Khare, Pasayat, Bhan, Balakrishnan, JJ) today observed that it would now deal with only the legal issues arising from the President's reference under Article 143 and not concern itself with Gujarat-specific matters.

"Gujarat is not an issue before us," the five-member Constitution Bench said. It also made it clear that it wouldn't be able to give its opinion on the presidential reference quickly enough to enable a new Legislature to be in place by early October — as desired by the state government.

Senior counsel Mr KK Venugopal, representing the poll panel gave the tentative timeframe for the elections.

The clarification from the EC's counsel came during some wrangling over fixing the schedule for hearings on the presidential reference. The Chief Justice observed that the EC order of 16 August (by which the demand for an early poll was rejected) was not categorical: were the polls being planned for November-December or would a schedule be considered at the time?

Polls were planned for November-December, Mr Venugopal said. The language used in the poll panel order referred to a series of steps to be taken, including a revision of the electoral rolls, for which an accepted timeframe existed.

The court's observation that it would not be able to complete the hearing before the October-deadline was also made during the discussion on the schedule for the hearings.

Fixing 17 September as the date when hearing will start on submissions on the queries raised by the President, the Bench declined to impose any deadline on the proceedings, saying it wished to deal with the matter as expeditiously as possible. It asked counsel to make their written submissions in

advance, so that the parties could get them.

The court decided to simultaneously deal with a public interest litigation that sought a ruling on whether there was any time-limit on a chief minister functioning in a caretaker's capacity after the Assembly had been dissolved. The petition says the Constitution has no provision for a caretaker chief minister after the Assembly is dissolved.

The Chief Justice, Mr BN Kirpal, said that during the hearings the court would not go into questions of fact and the ground situation in Gujarat. It would proceed on the presumption that the EC's assessment was "correct".

Solicitor-General Mr Harish Salve, who represented the Centre, wanted the matter to be dealt with quickly. He felt the arguments could be concluded within two weeks. The court said: "It will be our endeavour to give an opinion on the presidential reference as expeditiously as possible" But "if you think a decision can be given by 2 October, it is impossible for all practical purposes."

Would it be possible to complete the hearings by 1 November? asked Mr Kapil Sibal, Congress' senior counsel. The court would sit for only 24 days between now and that date, he said. Since the issues raised in the reference were serious, all concerned should be permitted their full say.

The three questions on which the President sought the opinion of the Supreme Court were:

■ Is Article 174 subject to the decision of the Election Commission under Article 324 as to the schedule of elections to the Assembly?

■ Can the Election Commission frame a schedule for elections to an Assembly on

the premise that any infraction of the mandate of Article 174 would be remedied by a resort to Article 356 by the President?

■ Is the Election Commission under a duty to carry out the mandate of Article 174 by drawing upon all the requisite resources of the Union and the State to ensure free and fair elections?

Vaghela one up on Modi, page 6

Naiduspeak

HYDERABAD, Sept. 2. — Mr Chandrababu Naidu, celebrating his seven years as chief minister, told partymen here today that the BJP was yet to evolve a developmental agenda for the country.

He also said Dr Abdul Kalam was turning out to be a good "counter-check" to the BJP at a time when it was reviving its Hindutva agenda, adding that this would invite trouble for the party.

On Mrs Sonia Gandhi's political acumen, Mr Naidu said: "She is not able to learn or understand to develop a proper perspective. Her hollowness as a leader is being exposed". Calling the BJP-led coalition flat-footed, he said: "Mr Vajpayee is a very good man ... but is unable to display a sense of urgency or a sense of speed." — SNS

Details on page 6



Mr Chandrababu Naidu: Plain talk

MOVE TO AVOID CONFRONTATION WITH WAGHELA

Modi postpones rath yatra

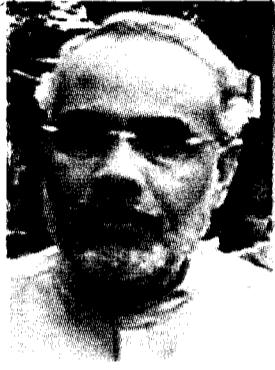
By Manas Dasgupta

GANDHINAGAR, SEPT. 1. In a bid to avoid a confrontation with the supporters of the Gujarat pradesh Congress president, Shankarsinh Waghela, the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, has postponed his "Gaurav Rath Yatra" to September 7.

Mr. Modi indicated his "unilateral decision" to postpone the rath yatra by four days in a letter to Mr. Waghela in which he also wished him "all success" in the September 3 ceremony at the Bhathiji Maharaj temple at Phagwel village from where the Chief Minister was also scheduled to launch his rath yatra the same day.

Mr. Modi's decision came in the wake of a threat by Mr. Waghela to launch a 24-hour hunger strike in front of the Bhathiji temple tomorrow in protest against the "misuse" of Government machinery to harass him and prevent his supporters from converging at the village for the ceremony.

Surprisingly, even the State BJP president, Rajendrasinh Ra-



na, who is due to accompany Mr. Modi in the rath yatra, and the chief co-ordinator of the programme, Jayantibhai Barot, MP, were caught unawares about the Chief Minister's sudden decision. Minutes before the announcement by the Chief Minister's office, Mr. Rana, who was in his home town of Bhavnagar, insisted that there was no change in the schedule and the party would go ahead with the programme "come what may." Mr. Barot himself was away in Phagwel giving final touches for the launching of the rath yatra.

Both the Chief Minister's Office and the party claimed that there had been pressure from the central high command to re-schedule the rath yatra and the decision had been taken by Mr. Modi on his own "in the larger interest of the unity of the people in the State and maintaining peace and tranquillity."

In a joint statement, Mr. Rana and the party's newly-appointed general-secretary, Bhupendrasinh Chudasma, said a large number of "sadhus and sants," some prominent citizens and others had expressed concern over the worsening situation in Phagwel and on their advice Mr. Modi unilaterally decided to postpone the rath yatra.

Mr. Modi in his letter to Mr. Waghela also said that he was taking the decision because many "sadhus" and well-wishers had been feeling uncomfortable over the developments following parallel ceremonies of the BJP and the supporters of the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, which prompted him to take the decision. In a dig at Mr. Waghela, Mr. Modi in his

letter said he was praying to God to grant him the "strength to follow a path of truthfulness and honour democratic values in future." He made it clear that he believed that Mr. Waghela had chalked out the programme much after his rath yatra date was announced, to stall the BJP programme in an undemocratic manner. But, he said, he was "making the way clear for him for a successful ceremony at the temple on September 3," and added that Mr. Waghela would be granted official permission if he sought one from the Government even now.

Mr. Waghela had in a letter to the Lok Sabha Speaker, Manohar Joshi, last night complained of police harassment to his supporters and sought his "protection" to visit his constituency to participate in the religious ceremony. He said he was apprehensive that the State Government machinery would be "misused" to prevent him and his supporters from reaching Phagwel on that day to make the ruling party's rath yatra programme a success.

2 SEP 2002

DEADLOCK OVER GUJARAT POLL ISSUE

Supreme Court to hear Presidential reference on Monday

By J. Venkatesan

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10/10/20
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NEW DELHI, AUG. 29. Even as the Supreme Court observed today that the three-point Presidential reference on the standoff between the BJP and the Election Commission on the Gujarat elections be heard as expeditiously as possible, it adjourned the hearing to Monday, September 2, as many of the States have not received the notices issued by the court on August 26.

A five-Judge Constitution Bench, comprising the Chief Justice, B.N. Kirpal, V.N. Khare, K.G. Balakrishnan, Ashok Bhan and Arijit Pasayat, adjourning the matter asked the Solicitor-General, Harish Salve, to ensure that notices reached all the

State Governments.

(The Bench had on August 26 ordered notices to all the States and the six national political parties — BJP, Congress, CPI, CPI (M), Nationalist Congress Party and BSP — returnable by today and indicated that it would fix a time schedule for the hearing of the Presidential reference.

Earlier, Mr. Salve, appearing for the Central Government, submitted that as many State Governments had already made their appearances before the court, a time-schedule could be drawn up today itself for hearing the reference.

But senior counsel for the Congress, Kapil Sibal, told the court that it would not be proper to draw a time-schedule for

the hearing without completing the process of serving the notices in the court's record.

The Bench observed that since the reference involved important questions of law concerning elections — which had become frequent in the country — the parties should sit together and draw up a schedule for the hearing before September 2 and inform the court accordingly.

The Presidential reference relates to interpretation of Article 174, vis-a-vis the powers of the Election Commission under Article 324 to hold elections and whether the Commission could recommend the imposition of President's rule in a State if Article 174 could not be complied with.

Gujarat debate thrown open

OUR LEGAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Aug. 26: Elections in Gujarat literally became a national issue today with the Supreme Court issuing notices to all state governments and major political parties on the presidential reference seeking clarifications on the Election Commission's decision against calling immediate polls.

Notices have been sent to all state advocates-general and the Election Commission, too.

A five-member Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice of India B.N. Kirpal decided to cover all states as the question involved elections to an Assembly.

The six parties with "national political party status" short-listed for the notices are the Congress, the BJP, the CPM, the CPI, the Nationalist Congress Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party.

When solicitor-general Harish Salve, appearing for the Centre, contended that the Gujarat Assembly had to be reconstituted by October 2 under Article 174, the judges said: "You don't worry about that for the time being. We will work out a time schedule for hearing of the reference on Thursday."

All five parties but the BSP — its lawyer was not present — accepted the notices through their counsel. Finding that the BSP had been issued the notice, some regional parties pleaded that they, too, be given a chance to address the court on such an important reference. But the court declined the prayer, saying proceedings would be further delayed. "Then it will be difficult to control the proceedings," Kirpal said.

The Centre had taken recourse to a presidential reference after the Election Commission refused to give in to its demand for polls in October.

The BJP had contended that as the gap between two Assembly sittings could not exceed six months under the Constitution, the commission was bound to call elections in early October. The Gujarat Assembly had last met in April.

However, legal experts differ on the matter. According to former Delhi High Court chief justice Rajinder Sachar, the six-month clause was valid only for an existing Assembly and could not be applied to Gujarat as chief minister Narendra Modi had recommended dissolution in July.

Hence, no constitutional problem would be set off even if elections are held in January. This is also the stand of the Election Commission.

This is the first time the President has referred such a matter to the Supreme Court.

Modi mudbath ends minus regret

RADHIKARAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Aug. 25: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's rebuke to Narendra Modi had little effect on either the Gujarat chief minister or the state BJP.

A statement issued by Modi in Gujarat today betrayed no sign of repentance. "Following the Prime Minister's guidelines on the issue, the controversy with the chief election commissioner has come to an end," the terse statement said.

Modi stuck to his stand that the Election Commission should call early elections in Gujarat, saying: "Five crore people of Gujarat should be given the opportunity to elect a popular government as early as possible."

Sources close to Modi asserted he would persist with his "defiance" and that there was no question of apologising for his remarks against poll panel chief J.M. Lyngdoh.

A senior BJP leader from Gujarat reflected the sentiments of the pro-Modi group when he said: "Atalji has spent many years in public life. We understand that, as the Prime Minister, he has certain compulsions which probably prompted him to issue the statement yesterday. But we have to face the Hindus of Gujarat and every one of them is upset with Lyngdoh's attitude. It is a Lyngdoh-versus-Modi battle and the BJP has to back the chief minister."

Even the BJP's central lead-

ers went half-way with their Gujarat counterparts and stressed that Vajpayee's criticism should not be given a "negative" interpretation but "read in the spirit in which it was intended".

Party spokesman Sunil Shastri said: "It was taken as an advice and suggestion by the Prime Minister that people in senior constitutional positions should not indulge in allegations and counter-allegations. It is expected it will be taken as advice."

Kalam signs

New Delhi, Aug. 25 (PTI): President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has signed the Ordinance on electoral reforms after the Cabinet sent it back to him last night. Attorney-General Soli J. Sorabjee met Kalam and said the President's suggestions could be taken up in Parliament.

Beneath the endeavour to show up Vajpayee's statement as "marg darshan" (guidance), both the pro- and anti-Modi sections admitted to various layers of power tussle in the parivar of which Gujarat was a manifestation: between Vajpayee and deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, within the RSS and between Modi and his predecessor Keshubhai Patel.

Sources pointed out that the latest issue of the RSS journal *Panchajanya* has an article by

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spokesman M.G. Vaidya supporting ousted Gujarat minister Haren Pandya and slamming Modi. Vaidya was away on tour but Sangh sources said he was close to human resources development minister Murlidhar Joshi. "It is not a coincidence that Joshi also chose to criticise Modi in the presence of the RSS *sarsanghchalak* (K.S. Sudarshan) at Nagpur recently," said a source.

While some believe that Joshi anticipated the Prime Minister's statement, others said he was on the side of the Sudarshan-Vaidya axis, which has emerged to check the clout of Madan Das Devi, the RSS joint general secretary in charge of the political wing.

For the past two years, Devi, the Sangh link with the party and the government, has overshadowed Sudarshan, who rarely makes a public appearance.

While the original intention in promoting him was to rein in Sudarshan from making statements against the government, BJP sources said the plan backfired on Vajpayee.

Devi, sources said, was instrumental in forcing Vajpayee to elevate Advani as deputy Prime Minister. The flurry of conflicting statements on the Gujarat standoff has crystallised a perception in the BJP that the Sudarshan-Vaidya-Joshi axis could be a potential counter to a group associated with Devi and Advani.



Sonia Gandhi wears a scarf symbolising non-violence at a meeting near Ahmedabad. She launched the Congress election campaign in Gujarat on Sunday. (PTI) ■ See Page 6

Lyngdoh tests legal steps

KAY BENEDICT

New Delhi, Aug. 23: The Election Commission is planning to seek legal opinion on whether it can proceed against Narendra Modi for his derogatory comments against chief election commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh.



Lyngdoh

Commission sources said though the poll panel has no contempt powers unlike the courts, Modi's fulminations amount to interference

with the conduct of free and fair elections in Gujarat.

At a rally near Vadodara on Tuesday, the Gujarat chief minister had referred to Lyngdoh's religion, Christianity, and insinuated that he was close to Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

"Someone asked me, has Lyngdoh come from Italy. I said we would need to ask Rajiv Gandhi," Modi had said at the rally.

Lyngdoh today described Modi's outburst as "despicable" and asserted that such utterances would not affect the functioning of the commission. "These remarks reflected how cruel the polity is," he said. "I don't have any religion. I couldn't care less."

■ See Page 8

Modi launches tirade against CEC

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, AUG. 22. Even as the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, has launched a scathing attack on the Chief Election Commissioner, J.M. Lyngdoh, for refusing to comply with his demand for early elections to the State Assembly, the recovery of two skeletons from an underground gutter in Ahmedabad has raised fresh questions about the communal riots.

The recovery of the two skeletons from a gutter in Rakhial, one of the worst-hit labour-dominated localities in eastern Ahmedabad, has forced police to draw a fresh list of the persons claimed missing since the riots and to renew an intensive search to trace them. The government has been vehemently denying claims of any more person missing.

The skeletons were found by conservancy workers of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) earlier this week, during a routine cleaning of the gutters. The cleaning operations are normally carried out before the monsoon but this year it was delayed both due to the riots and also because of lack of rains.

Two pairs of torn trousers and a piece of cloth, purported to be part of a shirt, recovered near the skeletons helped in their identification. The skeletons were identified by the parents of two teen-aged youths, Shah Nawaj Mohammad Iqbal and Mohammad Shabir Ahmad, both residents of Rangwala Chipa ni Chali in Rakhial. The parents said the boys left home on the morning of February 28, the first day of the post-Godhra riots, to call on some friends in a hospital and never returned.

The parents had long back lodged complaints with police about their wards missing. The Muslim leaders claim that at least 500 people were still "missing". Some of them might have gone to stay with their friends and relatives in other States and a few youths are reported to have crossed the border to join militant outfits in Pakis-

tan, but the probability of a large number of them having been killed and their bodies dumped somewhere could not be ruled out.

The Congress-controlled AMC has agreed to launch gutter-cleaning operations in a big way in other riot-affected parts of the city for possible skeletons. The State Government, all these months, maintained that all the citizens had been accounted for and there was none "missing."

The list of the "missing" persons was among the reasons cited by the Muslim organisations and other non-government bodies, during the visit of the full team of the Election Commission earlier this month, to oppose the ruling BJP's demand for early elections. The Congress also was in favour of a thorough revision of the electoral rolls in the post-riot period.

This, however, did not matter to Mr. Modi and his Cabinet colleagues, who claimed that the CEC was "biased" against Gujarat in denying early elections, while agreeing to hold elections in many other States where the law and order situation was more alarming.

Mr. Modi, while addressing rallies in small towns and villages, is referring the CEC by his full name — James Michael Lyngdoh — apparently to drive home the point that he is a Christian and therefore "all his sympathies lie with the minorities against the interests of Hindus". He even suggested that the CEC might have been influenced by the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, because she was also a Christian.

Mr. Modi also attacked Mr. Lyngdoh for his decision against early elections on the ground that the situation was not being "conducive" and said by the standards set by the CEC, even ordinary criminals would be able to stop elections in any State.

"What all one needs would be to give contract to some bootleggers and criminals to kill a few people, set fire to some houses and burn a few shops and Mr.

Lyngdoh will stop elections," Mr. Modi told a rally at Bodeli in Vadodara district. "It will be a simple formula for anyone who wants to defer the polls in a State," he added.

Wondering what standard the CEC had adopted in the State to put off polls, the Chief Minister also said: "Anyone who sees such a huge gathering here cannot say that the situation is not conducive to holding elections in the State."

His vitriol against the CEC and insinuations against Ms. Gandhi were condemned by the former State Congress president, Amarsinh Chaudhary — a former Chief Minister — who said that such remarks against a constitutional authority and the leader of a major political party were not befitting a Chief Minister.

Mr. Chaudhary said that it was unfortunate that Mr. Modi tried to drag in even the Congress president though she had nothing to do with the CEC's decision. He said Mr. Modi would not have made such remarks against Mr. Lyngdoh if he had seen his own Home Ministry's reports about the communal riots in which the State administration had admitted to its widespread impact. Mr. Chaudhary also regretted Mr. Modi's comparison of a constitutional authority like the CEC with "bootleggers" and "ordinary criminals" to belittle the Commission's considered conclusion to defer the polls in the State.

Madhusudan Mistry, Congress MP and close confidant of the State unit president, Shankarsinh Waghela, also condemned Mr. Modi's remarks and said the BJP was trying to denigrate the office of the CEC just because he refused to toe the ruling party line.

Another MP and general secretary of the Indian Union of Muslim League, E.I. Ahmed, who was on a visit to the State, regretted the BJP's attacks on Mr. Lyngdoh and said the ruling party was treating "India as part of Gujarat rather than Gujarat being a part of India."

Modi revives gaurav yatra

Rathin Das
Ahmedabad, August 20

UNFAZED BY the Prime Minister's annoyance, which in July forced a postponement of the Gujarat gaurav yatra, the BJP State unit has decided to revive the programme beginning September 3.

State BJP president Rajendrasinh Rana announced here today that the party decided to revive the gaurav yatra to kick off the party's election campaign. He also said that the situation was different now and the yatra would not be called off.

Though Rana said that the revival of the yatra had the approval of the BJP high command, he ruled out the participation of the Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister, who represents the Gandhinagar constituency in Parliament.

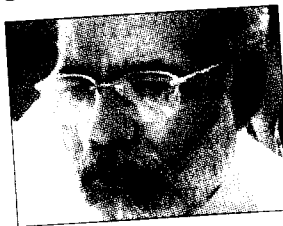
In July, the yatra was to have been flagged off from the temple town of Ambaji in north Gujarat. But this time around it will start from Phagvel in Kheda district and stop for the night at Himatnagar after passing through the sensitive towns of Kapadvanj, Kalol and Prantij. All these towns witnessed anti-minority violence during the post-Godhra riots.

On September 4, the yatra will pass through several small towns in Mehsana district before stopping for the night in Chanasma in north Gujarat.

During the first phase of the yatra, it will be held on all weekends in September. The rest of the programme will be drawn up later, Rana said.

Though the decision to revive the yatra was taken at a State party executive meeting a fortnight back, analysts believe the

ON A ROLL



YATRA STARTS

On Sept 3, two months after it was put off on the Prime Minister's instruction

FOR THE BJP

The yatra is a kick-off to the poll campaign. Modi will travel to every Assembly constituency

OPPOSITION FEARS

This could whip up communal passions

postponement of the Assembly elections prompted the party to announce the yatra schedule at this point of time despite the fact that the timing of the elections have not yet been finalised.

The revival of the yatra, party insiders feel, will not only help regenerate the Hindutva wave but also reinvigorate the rank and file who have been disappointed by the postponement of elections.

The BJP legislators of the dissolved Assembly, who have suddenly been deprived of all their perks and privileges, are also feeling apprehensive about their prospects when elections are held. With the revival of the yatra, these people would be energised, BJP insiders said.

Apex court receives reference on Gujarat

By Rakesh Bhatnagar
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

5/11/18

New Delhi: The supreme court on Tuesday received from President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam a three-point reference seeking its opinion on the legality of the Election Commission's controversial observation that President's rule might have to be imposed in Gujarat because the assembly polls cannot be held within the stipulated time-frame.

Chief Justice B.N. Kirpal will set up at least a five-judge bench to answer the reference involving significant constitutional issues relating to the wide powers of the EC under Article 324 as also the constitutional mandate under Article 174 that there should not be more than a gap of six months between two sessions of the house.

The three-point reference signed by President Kalam broadly asks the apex court:

- Does Article 174 yield to Article 324, meaning thereby, is the time-frame provided under Article 174 subject to the EC's order under Article 324?

- Can the EC, under Article 324, frame an election schedule on the premise that if the time-frame provided under Article 174 is not

9/8/18

complied with, the President will step in under Article 356?

- Is the EC bound by the mandate of Article 174 and, therefore, bound to conduct elections within the time-frame drawing the forces and resources as required from the central government for conducting free and fair elections?

Among other things, Article 174 says that there cannot be a gap of more than six months between two sittings of an assembly, while Article 324 gives exclusive jurisdiction to the EC to conduct and supervise polls.

The Centre's anxiety for the apex court's opinion is understandable, but due to various factors the issue, which involves all political parties, all the states and the basic features of the Constitution such as democracy and free and fair polls, is unlikely to be resolved by the end of November.

All political parties may make their submissions after a notice of reasonable time, which may be four weeks. Submissions will also be made by other necessary parties, including the Centre, on the interpretation of Articles 324, 356 and 174 along with the Constituent Assembly debates and the apex court judgment on imposition of the President's rule under Article 356 (S.R. Bommai case).

21 AUG 2012

Advani junks Lyngdoh logic on Prez rule

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 19

THOUGH PRIME Minister AB Vajpayee declined to comment on the Election Commission's refusal to hold early elections in Gujarat, his deputy, LK Advani, unleashed a broadside against the poll panel. Gujarat Governor SS Bhandari also joined in.

"The Election Commission's job," Advani told television channels, "is to hold elections, not stop them."

In the same vein, he added, "The commission can ask for more forces or more arrangements to conduct elections. (It) cannot postpone elections and say there should be President's rule. It is not their job to prevent elections."

While Advani attacked the EC, the Government on Monday forwarded to the President a draft of the reference that will go to the Supreme Court (SC). If the President approves the draft on Tuesday, it will be sent to the SC by Wednesday.

In the circumstances, Vajpayee was guarded. "The issue is before the President. I will not comment," he said.

But after meeting Vajpayee, Bhandari told a television channel he did not agree with the EC's assessment. He said the situation in Gujarat was normal and elections could be held.

Advani, on his part, was categorical that the EC had overstepped its brief by obliquely suggesting that non-compliance with Article 174 forced by delayed elections would compel the "Presi-

Voices

LK ADVANI: The Election Commission's job is to hold elections, not stop them.

AB VAJPAYEE: The issue is before the President. I will not comment.

JM LYNGDOH: Politicians have the freedom to do what they want.

dent to step in". "If he (Chief Election Commissioner JM Lyngdoh) had confined his observation to (the) opinion that the law and order situation (in Gujarat) is not favourable for an election, you could have differed with it but it would not have been anything which could be legally challenged," he said.

He did add, however, that the decision to refer the EC's decision to the Supreme Court did not amount to a confrontation with Nirvachan Sadan.

BJP spokesman Arun Jaitley also criticised the CEC though, he added, he had nothing personal against Lyngdoh.

He said Lyngdoh was assuming it had to set a timetable that would violate Article 174. Jaitley also said Lyngdoh was making three other untenable assumptions: That a violation of Article 174 must be corrected through President's rule (Article 356); that not holding elections would force the Government to impose President's rule; and that Parliament would clear such a move.

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20 AUG 2002

Ranil advocates 'step-by-step' approach for talks

By V.S. Sambandan

COLOMBO, AUG. 18. The Sri Lanka Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, has advocated a "step-by-step" approach for the direct talks between his Government and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), expected to start in Thailand in mid-September.

The Prime Minister, in his first major political meeting after the tentative dates for the commencement of talks in Thailand were announced, has also counselled "patience" and said the final goal was to find a solution which brought in peace, with "dignity" for all within an "undivided" Sri Lanka.

At the executive meeting of his

United National Party (UNP), held in the eastern town, Trincomalee, Mr. Wickremesinghe has called upon Sri Lankans "to be patient about the peace process", the State-run *Sunday Observer* said.

In a clear recognition that the country was in for a long haul, the Prime Minister was reported to have said, "achieving success in the peace talks is like removing a landmine. It will have to be done step-by-step, with patience".

Calling upon all political parties to support the peace process, Mr. Wickremesinghe said, "we go to the negotiating table, not as the UNP, but as the Government of this country". Adding that he did not wish to talk

about a time-frame, the Prime Minister said, "Both sides have their standpoints.

Each side should try to understand the other and the background that led to their stand.

Then we can sustain the talks for a longer period. There are bound to be problems. It is natural and if no problem arises, it would be surprising".

The final goal of the Government, he said, "is peace and providing an opportunity to all to live with dignity in an undivided country". The Prime Minister's observations at his party's executive committee meeting come against the backdrop of a sharply-divided political scenario in the south. The UNP, which presently holds a majority in Parlia-

ment, and the People's Alliance (PA), led by the President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, have been bitter rivals for nearly five decades. The PA, however, has extended its support for the ongoing peace process, the first steps for which were taken during its regime between 1994 and 2001.

Though the two parties continue to oppose each other on several issues, there is a large degree of understanding that the decades-long separatist conflict requires a negotiated settlement, with greater devolution of powers. Differences of opinion, which are not apparent now, however, are likely to come up when matters of detail are taken up for discussion.

Respite for Gujarat

Wounded Gujarat has been spared the trauma of facing an election that was sought to be imposed on it by a government looking to harvest the state's misfortunes for its own gains. What the state desperately needed was not the stressful exercise of premature polls but sensitive measures aimed at healing the lingering pain of the recent communal strife. That bit of help has come finally — not as a belated gesture of goodwill from Narendra Modi but from an election commission determinedly resisting his cynical ploy to hold early elections. The chief minister and his supporters in the BJP are expectedly angry with the EC, in particular chief election commissioner J M Lyngdoh. The CEC's forthright comments during a recent tour of the state had given a fair idea of where the commission's sympathies lay: With the thousands of riot victims, many of whom hugged the safety of the relief camps for fear of facing hostilities outside. Yet, it must come as a blow to the caretaker government that the EC has refused even to announce a time-frame for elections, holding out only the promise of reviewing the situation by November-December.

It is a safe bet that questions will be raised about the propriety of the EC outlining precise steps for the restoration of normality in Gujarat. Take for example, the EC's directive that the guilty be punished, victims be given access to their homes and honest officers restored to their posts. It could be argued that these are strictly executive matters, far outside the jurisdiction of the Election Commission. But equally, free and fair elections are the bedrock of democracy, which, in turn, places stringent obligations upon the EC, the sole constitutional authority charged with ensuring that outcome. The EC has summed up the situation in Gujarat in one sentence: The riots have eroded public trust in the police and the administration. This is a devastating indictment by a constitutional body, made more grave by the repeated assertions by top BJP leaders that all is well in Gujarat. It is to the credit of the EC that it has refused to conduct elections in this vitiated atmosphere. To have done so would have been to strike against the fundamentals of democracy. To that extent, the EC's formula for the return of public confidence is a necessary first step towards conducting free and fair polls in the state.

Centre goes to court via Kalam

KAY BENEDICT

New Delhi, Aug. 18: The Cabinet today decided to make a presidential reference to seek the Supreme Court's opinion on the constitutional questions arising out of the Election Commission's rejection of the BJP demand for early polls in Gujarat.

An extraordinary meeting of the Cabinet, to which solicitor general Harish Salve and additional solicitor general Kirit Raval were invited, discussed the "far-reaching implications" of the poll panel's order and decided to invoke the President's power to consult the apex court under Article 143.

Sources said the Cabinet was almost unanimous that the commission had "transgressed" the constitutional powers conferred on it. A few ministers wanted the Centre to challenge the commission in court but A.B. Vajpayee said "the path of confrontation" should be avoided. However, the Gujarat government is likely

to move the Supreme Court.

The presidential reference will be made tomorrow and is expected to reach the Supreme Court in a day or two.

The decision to question the order is being seen as an attempt to bail out Narendra Modi, who had sought to force the Election Commission's hand by dissolving the Assembly last month.

The step might accentuate the government-poll panel confrontation and spark a political row. Opposition parties have castigated the BJP for trying to undermine the independence of constitutional bodies like the Election Commission. Chief election commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh has refused comment.

Addressing reporters after the meeting, information and broadcasting minister Sushma Swaraj refuted suggestions that the Centre was on a collision course with the poll panel. It was not a question of the BJP taking a stand, but one that involved constitutional issues.

The Cabinet is seeking

clarifications on:

■ Whether the commission can recommend imposition of Central rule in a state where it feels polls cannot be held.

■ Article 356 postulates that to impose President's rule, there must be a constitutional breakdown. Moreover, imposition of Article 356 has to be ratified by Parliament. If Parliament rejects it, how to deal with the resultant constitutional crisis.

■ Whether Article 174(1) — that stipulates that not more than six months should pass between two sittings of an Assembly — is mandatory.

■ Whether Article 174 cannot be read in isolation — the stand taken by the poll panel — or read with Article 324, which provides overweening powers to the Election Commission on polls, and whether Article 174 must yield to Article 324.

■ If Article 174 is mandatory, can the Election Commission take recourse to Article 324 to withhold polls?

■ See Page 6

19 AUG 2002

Lyngdoh leash on Modi election rush

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Aug. 16: The Election Commission today rejected the BJP's demand for early polls in Gujarat, dealing another blow to the party still reeling under the impact of murder allegations against Pramod Mahajan.

At the end of a marathon meeting, the commission said it would consider "framing a suitable schedule" in November-December after electoral rolls are corrected and conditions conducive to free and fair polls created. The three-member panel was unanimous that law and order in the riot-hit state "is still far from normal".

The BJP had been pushing for elections in October. But the commission said there was an avalanche of representations against polls by almost all Opposition parties, some former Prime Ministers, retired chief justices of high courts, various NGOs and other social and cultural organisations.

Chief minister Narendra Modi had dissolved the Assembly last month and then cited the Constitution to argue that elections would have to be completed by the first week of October. Article 174(1) holds that there should not be a gap of more than six months between two Assembly sittings, and the Gujarat House had last met in April.

But the commission did not buy the BJP's argument. "Article 174(1) cannot be read in isolation and it has to be read along with



JM Lyngdoh

other relevant provisions of the Constitution, particularly Article 324," it said.

"Article 324, which is not subject to the provisions of any other Article of the Constitution, including Article 174(1), vests the superintendence, direction and control, inter alia, of the preparation of electoral rolls for, and conduct of, elections to Parliament and state legislatures in the Election Commission," it added. "Elections, in the context of democratic institutions, mean free and fair elections and not merely a ritual to be gone through periodically," the commission stressed.

Hinting that imposition of President's rule was the only option now, the poll panel said: "The non-observance of the provisions of Article 174(1) in the aforesaid eventuality would mean that the government of the

state cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution within the meaning of Article 356(1) of the Constitution and the President would then step in."

Amid speculation that the BJP might go to court against the commission's decision, the party held its silence and said it would comment only after studying the order. Putting up a brave face, spokesperson V.K. Malhotra said: "Whenever elections are held, the BJP will win hands down and that is why the Opposition wanted the polls deferred. We wanted the polls to be held before October 10."

In a severe indictment of the Modi government, the commission said: "In this environment, election campaigns evoking passions will only shatter the fragile peace unless adequate confidence-building measures are taken up in earnest and with urgency."

It released a 40-page order giving reasons why the situation is not conducive to polls. "The wounds of the communal divide following the riots have not yet healed. The slow progress in relief and rehabilitation on the one hand and non-arrest and non-punishment of the guilty and the fear of communal backlash on the other have hampered the process of restoration of normalcy to the state," it said.

Chief election commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh and his colleagues, B.B. Tandon and T.S. Krishnamurthy, said people have lost confidence in police, administration and the political executive.

■ See Page 8

17 AUG 2002

THE TELEGRAPH

Echoes of Gujarat in Kalam cry

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Aug. 14: President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam today urged the nation to root out communal and other divisive clashes as they run counter to religion, tolerance and the country's pluralistic traditions but said he was confident people could be elevated to "noble minds".

In his first Independence Day-eve address to the nation, the President offered a simple solution on how to practise tolerance. "If we can go above our own personal hardships and see the problems of others and decide to work for a larger cause, then there is natural elevation of our minds," he said. "When we are lax in this, then our level of thinking goes down. I felt confident that all of us can be elevated to the level of noble minds if we just decide to understand others and to practise tolerance."

In an obvious reference to the Gujarat riots, Kalam said: "We have to eradicate communal and other divisive clashes sprouting in certain parts and remove the pains of our people whether it is in Jammu and Kashmir or in any other part of our country." Any act that runs counter to the "eternal values" of tolerance, truth and non-violence poses a threat to the fabric of free India.

Kalam said non-violence, tolerance, acceptance of all religions and the search for truth and fearlessness were the values that Mahatma Gandhi taught. "They are the cornerstones of our civilisational heritage and, therefore, of Indian polity," he said.

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His speech was a mix of hope and caution. Kalam said unity of minds can bring about all-round development and peace and also called for a "second vision" that could lift India from its status of a developing to a developed country by integrating actions in fields like agriculture, education, health and infrastructure.

The technocrat rejected Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's contention that Kashmir was an international issue. "I would like to reiterate that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India. It is not an international issue," he said, but added that India would be ready for bilateral talks once cross-border terrorism is brought to an end.

Maintaining that a permanent solution has to be found to combat terrorism, he said it was important to ensure that elections in Jammu and Kashmir are successfully completed to bring peace to the embattled state.

Referring to the frequent disruptions in Parliament and state legislatures, he said: "Parliament and legislatures have a crucial role in giving the vision of developed India and value-based polity. Our children should see the members of Parliament debating the vision of developed India, providing action plans and putting forth great thoughts."

Pointing out that children look for role models, Kalam said MPs and MLAs can shape the future of the country's youth by assuming that role. Each state has many examples of role models from the past, he said. "It is now time we create more role models for the present."

THE TELEGRAPH

1 1 02

Kalam all praise for state, people

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 13 AUGUST

THE Narendra Modi government in Gujarat heaved a sigh of relief as President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam concluded his two-day trip to the state on Tuesday. Contrary to apprehensions, the visit was a shot in the arm for the state government with the President praising the state administration and the NGOs for their "exemplary relief work" in quake-ravaged Bhuj.

The President spoke about the need to concentrate more on development. Dr Kalam, who shared the concerns of those affected by the communal strife in Ahmedabad, said it was time for the country to stand united to put the nation on the path of rapid development.



KALAM: IMPRESSED

"The current growth rate of 5% is not enough. We have to make it 10%. And this requires self-sufficiency in sectors like agriculture, food processing, health, education, infrastructure development, infotech development and critical technology. We have to have a vision for a country free from poverty and dis-

ease." Dr Kalam, who reached Deen Dayal Nagar in Bhuj from Ahmedabad on Tuesday morning, said he saw the people in great distress.

"But I am sure you will face the problems and solve them too. The chief minister is here with me and he will help you solve your problems," the President said. He specially lauded the people of Kutch for the fortitude they had shown in the face of such acute adversity. The President, who is an admirer of Mata Amritanandamayi Math, also travelled to see the village adopted by the Hindu missionaries. The President inspected a model house and inaugurated the community hall there. "It is good to see new buildings coming up here. I hope you show the country the way in rehabilitation measures," he said.

Narayanan speaks out

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 13 AUGUST

FORMER President K.R. Narayanan, on Tuesday, broke his silence on the riots in Gujarat and said he felt helpless for not being able to do anything. "As a President, I have often felt helpless when so many delegations come to me and tell their woes and I can't do anything about it. Gujarat was a major example of helplessness," he said. Mr Narayanan said the riots made him feel "sad and ashamed." He may have reserved his comments till he left Rashtrapati Bhavan to avoid any controversy.

Kalam balm for Bhuj quake victims

Press Trust of India

BHUI, Aug. 13. — The President spent the second day of his Gujarat visit today with the victims of the earthquake that struck Kutch last year and appreciated the ongoing rehabilitation work.

"When I see the kind of houses built by multiple agencies, I am confident that great things are possible in the state and in the country," he said while addressing a public meeting at the junction of Bagala, Modfar and Mukhana villages about 40 km from here.

Addressing meetings in different villages of the Kutch region, Dr Kalam, who recalled his visit to the area immediately after the quake, said: "I was wondering what message I had for you. But I have a message to carry from Kutch to the rest of the country....the

indomitable spirit of the people of Kutch. I am glad that so many houses have been built in a short time and I convey my congratulations to all concerned," he said.

In his last night's statement after his visit to the riot-ravaged areas, the President said one of his missions was to personally assure the rehabilitation of the sufferers.

"The chief minister, some ministers and senior Gujarat government officials and a representatives of a few NGOs, who were with me, explained the relief action already taken and those that have been planned. The grievances, the people made, should merit immediate attention of those concerned and brisk actions taken," he said.

Dr Kalam also said: "Having seen all these and appreciating them against the background of Gujarat's rich tradition, I am convinced that

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the nation needs an intensified movement to eliminate communal and other forms of strife and bring about unity of minds." Addressing a meeting in Sukhpar village, Dr Kalam also pointed to the need of eradicating poverty.

Biswas on Gujarat

In Kolkata, Mr Anil Biswas, CPI-M state secretary, today condemned the BJP for criticising the poll panel for the election commissioners' comments on relief work for the riot victims. adds SNS. "Such criticisms are an insult to the high office of the Election Commission. We can't think of any political party using such intemperate language against the EC. We condemn the undemocratic attitude of the BJP," Mr Biswas said.

Another report on Gujarat, page 6
All the President's men, page 6

Kalam takes Modi's guided tour

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: It was a hard day's work for chief minister Narendra Modi in keeping President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam from becoming an 'unguided missile'. Even so, near the fag end of what was otherwise a clockwork guided tour, things went a tad awry.

As President Abdul Kalam moved from site to site on Day One of his tour on Monday, Mr Modi ensured that he was 'closely guided', remaining with him throughout the day. From an impromptu meeting with the chief minister on his arrival at the airport to his visit to Gandhi Ashram to meeting the riot-affected people in Naroda Patiya, Mr Modi seemed to have his way.

At Naroda Patiya, where a group of people began waving at him from the nearby Noorani Temple, Mr Modi's advice to the President was clear, "Just wave back."

Even the two groups of riot victims that the President met were carefully handpicked by Ahmedabad district collector K. Srinivas. None of those gathered protested. No one complained even as a huge crowd, including school children, stood behind barricades at a distance, hoping for a chance to talk to the First Citizen.

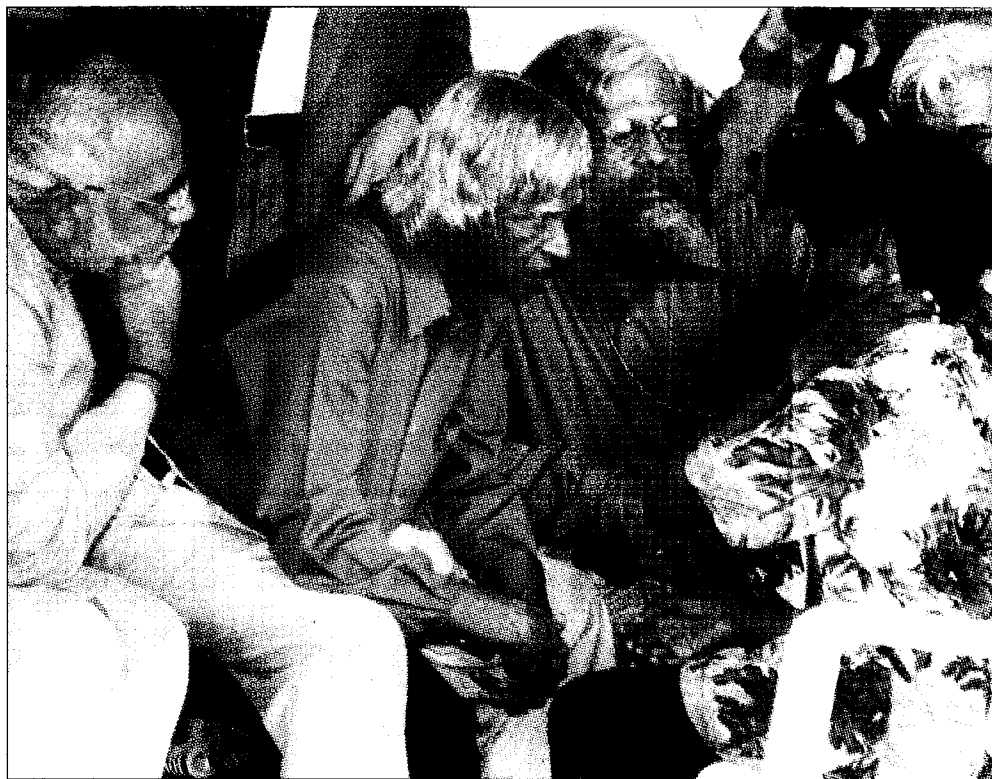
Ironically, the strongest representations against Mr Modi took place at the media-barraged Haj House in Kalupur. Just as all was going well for Mr Modi, an inmate of the relief camp gestured at him, saying, "Gujarat mein ahan-ti inhin ke vajah se hai." (There is disquiet in Gujarat only because of him.)

Several of the 1,500-odd people lodged in the camp candidly recounted their days of horror before Mr Kalam was whisked away to the widows' home in Juhapura an hour ahead of schedule at 6 p.m. Here, instead of the scheduled half-hour visit, Mr Kalam spent only ten minutes and barely heard the account of Firdaus Bano, whose husband had died in former MP Ehsaan Jaffri's house.

Mr Kalam went on a conducted tour of the home and acknowledged the children's 'salaam' with a 'walaikum salaam' as an upset Mr Modi remained silent. Firdaus is one of the 11 women widowed in the riots and lodged here. The children also rendered a stanza of *Hum honge kamyaab*, which Mr Kalam heard with rapt attention.

Mr Modi's 'job' began early, right from the touchdown of the special air force Boeing 737 at Sardar Vallabhbhai Airport. The President met Mr Modi and governor S.S. Bhandari at the VIP lounge for ten minutes. The unscheduled meeting not only delayed the President's cavalcade by about 15 minutes, but also took most people at the airport by surprise. Sources said Mr Modi took the opportunity to brief Mr Kalam on "how to avoid the expected awkward situation".

Throughout the day, Mr Modi donned various roles as he played the guide. He even translated questions posed by students in Gujarati at the Gandhi Ashram. On one occasion, while showing Mr Kalam around, the chief minister pulled out his pen from his pocket when the President wanted to autograph a rangoli portrait.



President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam listens to a teenaged boy orphaned in the riots as Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi (left) looks on at Naroda-Patiya in Ahmedabad on Monday. At centre is Y.S. Rajan, scientific advisor to the government of India, who was accompanying the President.

Camp residents on hunger strike

Ahmedabad: Around 4,000 residents of the Shah Alam relief camp on Monday sat on a hunger strike, protesting the "high-handed detention" of camp organiser Sharif Khan.

Mr Khan was picked up by the police from his residence on Sunday night under the apprehension that he could provoke relief camp inmates and riot victims to raise slogans and stage noisy demonstrations during President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's visit.

"The inmates have refused to take their afternoon meal, saying that they cannot have food when the man who has supported them for last five months is cooling his heels in

prison," Shafibhai Memon, a key organiser of the camp said. He said the inmates felt Mr Khan's detention was "unwarranted and uncalled for".

Police sources confirmed the agitation in the camp, saying "the inmates have so far refused to take their food". "Instead of Naroda-Patiya, the President's programme should have included a visit to the Shah Alam camp, where riot victims are residing," Shafibhai said. "The inmates wanted that Mr Kalam should visit their camp and see for himself their agony and listen to their grievances instead of going to Naroda-Patiya," he said. Agencies

TUESDAY, AUGUST 13, 2002

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EVEN AS THE Chief Election Commissioner, J.M. Lyngdoh, and his two colleagues are engaged in a reality check of the ground situation in Gujarat to convince themselves whether conditions truly exist for the holding of a free and fair poll, the ruling BJP is trying rather desperately all kinds of pressure tactics to make the panel settle for an early election, scheduling it sometime in September/October. Of a piece with the BJP's abrasive and intimidatory attitude in this matter is the party general secretary and former Law Minister, Arun Jaitley's sharp criticism of the Election Commission's articulation of serious concern about the unmet relief and rehabilitation needs of the riot victims. At one level, the 'mind-your-business' tenor palpable in Mr. Jaitley's comment sounded authoritarian vis-a-vis a Constitutional functionary. At another level, it also reflected a total lack of sensitivity to the basic human concerns of the thousands of families traumatised by the communal carnage post-Godhra and who are still haunted by the spectre of fear and yet to be resettled fully, thanks to the callousness — compounded by blatant discrimination against the minority community — of the Narendra Modi Government.

The fact that the Commission, after getting a report from a high-power official team, embarked upon the rather unusual course of all its three members visiting the State for an evaluation of the situation (against critical parameters for conducting the democratic exercise) before making up its mind on an appropriate poll schedule is in itself a recognition of the extraordinarily difficult circumstances attending the electoral event. In the face of a sharp polarisation in opinion across the political spectrum on the question whether the present situation is conducive enough for a free and fair poll, the Commission apparently wanted to be extra careful in discharging its Constitutional responsibility. Given the sort of socio-

communal turbulence that provided the backdrop to the impending Assembly polls, it is only natural and appropriate that the panel decided to take a hard look at the 'state' of the riot victims in all its varied dimensions — the number of families yet to be rehabilitated in the true sense of the term, the level of their sense of security and so on. As such, Mr. Jaitley's 'advice' to the Commission to "concentrate" on the business of conducting elections, while pointing out that there were designated bureaucrats to take care of relief and rehabilitation work, was not only unwarranted but coercive, even if veiled.

Anxious as the BJP is to politically utilise what it perceives to be the consolidation of the 'Hindu vote' — which indeed was the calculation behind Mr. Modi's decision to dissolve the Assembly eight months ahead of tenure — the party has been soliciting support for its demand for an 'early poll' in Gujarat by persistently contending that elections had been held in other States under much less conducive conditions. The examples invariably cited, as Mr. Jaitley has done, are Punjab, Assam and Jammu and Kashmir. The logic is terribly skewed for the simple reason that there can be no parallel between the two situations. Whereas the unsettled conditions in those States had everything to do with the scourge of terrorism (sustained in some measure by subversive forces from across the border), what obtains in Gujarat is the direct consequence of a minority-targeting pogrom carried out by the Hindutva elements under a benign Modi regime as part of a design to manipulate the democratic apparatus to subserve a blatantly majoritarian agenda. To equate the two qualitatively different types of situations is therefore to add insult to the injury of the vast sections of the minority community who are yet to be freed from the fear psychosis that overtook them in the aftermath of the Godhra incident.

A shocked Kalam listens to riot victims

By Our Special Correspondent

AHMEDABAD, AUG. 12. During the President, A.P.J. Kalam's visit here today the residents of Naroda-Patiya, scene of one of the worst-ever carnage in the riots, did not let go waste the few minutes they had with him. Their main demand was that the Government post a Central Reserve Police Force picket at the point to ensure their safety and security. "We have no faith in the State police, everything happened in their presence and the police on the contrary helped the attackers and opened fire on us," Mansur Dilwarhussain and Shabana, who lost her mother and an elder sister in the riots, and others told Dr. Kalam.

"We are the citizens of this country ... give us back our rights to live in this country," they told the President. "The

President did not tell us anything but he told something to the officials accompanying him," said Mansur later.

Dr. Kalam gave a patient hearing to the delegations that called on him at Naroda. While the convenor of the Gujarat Sarvajanik Relief Committee, Afzal Memon, requested Dr. Kalam to direct the State Government to take necessary steps for restructuring the economic backbone of the minority community, the administrator of the Islamic Relief Committee, Shakeel Ahmad, complained that the investigation into the riots were "biased and in the hands of incompetent people." He alleged that the Government was deliberately appointing pleaders to fight the cases of the minorities such lawyers having Sangh Parivar background.

To his complaint that the Government was doing nothing

for the restoration and repair of the 600 odd mosques and other places of worship, Dr. Kalam turned towards the Collector to learn about the Government's policy. According to Dr. Ahmad, the President was shocked to learn about the damage to a large number of places of worship and was equally amazed when told by the Collector that the Government, as a policy, could not take up repairs of the places of worship, which must be taken up only by the non-government organisations.

The President was also informed about the Government's reluctance to search for the persons reported "missing" since the riots. It was not taking necessary steps for the economic rehabilitation of the riot victims who were afraid to rejoin the jobs in the majority-dominated areas or carry out their business in such localities.

Mr. Memon requested the Dr. Kalam to try to "restore" the fundamental rights of the minorities "eroded" in the country in the last 55 years and provide for job reservations for the minorities to ensure an equal status for them with the majority community.

About the State Government, he said the relief and rehabilitation of the riot victims were far from adequate. Zubeda Banu told Dr. Kalam about 17 women in Naroda widowed in the riots but still awaiting assistance to start their lives afresh.

The only word of praise for Mr. Modi came from Dr. Ahmad. He said the Chief Minister did not try to interfere when the people and the delegations were pouring their hearts out to the President. "There was nothing else praiseworthy for the Government or the Chief Minister," he said.

Nothing is impossible: Kalam

By Our Special Correspondent

AHMEDABAD, AUG. 12. The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, was in his elements while interacting with a select group of school children at the Sabarmati Ashram here today.

He not only entertained questions from them, ranging from his mission in life to his opinion on the "swadeshi" movement, but also administered a pledge to dedicate their lives to make the country strong and a developed nation and asked them to repeat the pledge to their friends.

At the ashram, Dr. Kalam visited Meira Kutir, the Vinoba Bhava Kutir, and Hridaykunj, the building where Gandhiji lived, and observed three minutes silence sitting in front of the "charkha" used by Gandhiji. He also went around Hridaykunj and the Gandhi museum on the ashram premises.

He told the students to remove from their dictionary the word "impossible". "Everyone talks about something being impossible, your teacher may say so at times, and," turning towards Narendra Modi, "your Chief Minister may say something is impossible, but never believe this, nothing is impossible". Narrating the story of Lord Kelvin, who in 1895 said nothing heavier

than air could fly, Dr. Kalam said the great scientist was proved wrong when the Wright brothers invented the plane. "Follow the example of another scientist, Van Braun, who had said I will remove the word impossible from the dictionary".

He also narrated the story of the great Indian astronomical scientist, Chandrasekhar Subramaniam, who discovered the blackholes and propounded the theory that the sun would shine for another 10 billion years. During the British era, India produced five great scientists because the people then had the "motivation for knowledge" to prove themselves greater than the westerners.

"Knowledge is most important for transforming India from a developing into a strong and economically developed nation. We are a billion of brilliant people, we must make the world recognise India as a strong nation," he said. He read out a small couplet asking the children to follow it, "We dream dreams, dreams transform into thoughts, thoughts result in action."

"Sweat" was Dr. Kalam's brief answer when a student asked what made him successful in his life, and his mission would be to communicate "peace" to the people in

the country and the world and would dedicate all his energy to transform India into a strong developed nation. He said his school teacher, Subramaniam Aiyar, in Ramswaram, when he was a fifth standard student, inspired him to become a scientist when he taught him how the birds fly. "My teacher was my biggest inspiration," he said. "You need good teachers, a scientific environment and good books to inspire you to become scientists," he told the children. Mahatma Gandhi and Vikram Sarabhai, he said, were his ideals. What he expected from the school-going children was dedication in their studies and a desire to excel. "Like me you all should have a vision of a strong developed India and turn it into your mission," he said. Accompanied by the Chief Minister, Dr. Kalam was received at the ashram by four senior trustees and Gandhians, Narayan Desai, Chunnibhai Vaidya, Kartikeya Sarabhai, who is the son of Vikram Sarabhai, and the former Chief Justice of the Gujarat High Court, B. J. Diwan. He was taken round the ashram by its secretary, Amrut Modi. Dr. Kalam also paid a visit to the residence of his "guru" Vikram Sarabhai. Today happened to be Dr. Sarabhai's 83rd birth anniversary.

Double directive on
eve of President's visit

Gujarat puts on gloss & gag

BASANT RAWAT

Ahmedabad, Aug. 11: Smarting under the Lyngdoh whiplash, the Gujarat government is not taking any chances with A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

Literally whitewashing the warts, the Narendra Modi administration scrambled today to spruce up two riot-relief camps on the President's tour itinerary and barred the media from covering the most "risk-prone" leg of the visit.

Kalam is scheduled to visit two camps — Haj House and Juhapura Widow House — on Monday. Till late this evening, Haj House, sheltering 1,200 riot victims, was being hurriedly whitewashed.

At 5 pm, more than two dozen officials were busy disbursing compensation at Haj House. The camp inmates said they had not seen the government machinery so active except when Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Gujarat on April 4.

An element of controversy was injected into the President's scheduled tour, with the administration disallowing journalists from accompanying the President to the two camps, where he is scheduled to interact with the victims.

The administration's move to keep the interaction under wraps mirrors the anger that has been swelling up inside the camps.

Haj House shelters those displaced when several camps were forcibly closed last month to build the government's case that normality has returned to the state.

The inmates are certain to pour their hearts out before the

President, and the BJP is not sure what Kalam's response will be. If it is as biting as the comments of chief election commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh, who yesterday wondered aloud in full glare of the media whether the Baroda collector was a "joker", the government would like that to be heard by as fewer people as possible.

The poll panel chief, who wrapped up his Gujarat tour today, tried to play down the public rebuke as "utterances between two professionals". Lyngdoh, who said the final decision on the election schedule would be announced in a "couple of days", again displayed his now-famous reluctance to beat about the bush. Asked before his departure from Baroda whether he thought Gujarat was normal, Lyngdoh shot back: "Do you think normalcy is here?"

Chastened by the experience, most BJP leaders today withdrew into a shell and refused to make any comment on the President's visit. But a delighted Opposition rubbed salt into the wound.

"If the government has nothing to hide, why are they are not allowing the media to cover the visit to the camps?" asked Congress leader Hasmukh Patel.

The absence of "tutoring" in the camps is also worrying the administration. "We have not structured any programme. We are not tutoring the inmates. During his 30-minute stay in the camp, the President will interact with the inmates and meet the camp organisers. Everything has been left to the President," chief relief coordinator S.M.H. Bukhari said.

■ See Page 8

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RIOT-HIT TELL LYNGDOH:

'Give us a roof, then we will think of votes'

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, AUG. 10. The Chief Election Commissioner, J. M. Lyngdoh, and his two Commissioners, T. S. Krishnamurthy and B. B. Tandon, on a visit to Gujarat to decide on early Assembly elections, today heard in Vadodara the same appeals they heard in Ahmedabad yesterday from the riot-hit people: "First give us roofs, then we will think of votes."

The CEC and his deputies visited some of the riot-affected areas in Vadodara and talked to various delegations to assess the situation. The team, which is scheduled to return to Delhi late tonight or tomorrow morning, declined to make any comment.

The team visited Hanuman Tekri where Best Bakery, scene of the worst carnage in the city where 14 persons were burnt alive, is located. The Collector, who accompanied Mr. Lyngdoh and the team, was at the receiving end as he could not satisfactorily answer some queries on the background of the bakery.

The ruling BJP, which is demanding early elections, created a commotion at the Circuit House — where the CEC and the team were receiving delegations — raising objections about their agreeing to meet the former Minister, Jaspal Singh. The BJP claimed that Mr. Singh

was no longer connected with any political party or non-government organisations but its objections were brushed aside because the former BJP leader is now a member of the Samajwadi Party. The ruling party also expressed reservations that the CEC and the team were meeting only delegations of the Muslim minority, ignoring the Hindu-dominated areas hit by the riots.

Among the areas the team visited were Babamanpura, Kisanwadi, Panigate, Raja-Rani ki Talao and Marathe village on the outskirts from where many Muslim families had migrated during the riots. In fact, the sarpanch of the village may have ruined the BJP's case for early elections when he reportedly told Mr. Lyngdoh that only those Muslims who had land in the village were welcome to re-

turn. The non-land owning families would not be allowed to return.

Mr. Lyngdoh also held a one-to-one meeting with Zahira Sheikh, main complainant in the Best Bakery case, and her mother, who told the CEC that elections were not a priority for them. In many affected areas, the people raised banners with the slogan, "Give us roof and not elections."

While the people in Hindu-dominated Kisanwadi locality told the Commission that there was no hurdle in holding the elections immediately, a delegation of the People's Union of Civil Liberties, led by Kirit Bhatt, suggested against it. The Congress delegation accused the BJP of attempting to sabotage a Congress rallies. In contrast, the BJP claimed that the situation was conducive for elections.

CEC gives a piece of his mind

BARODA, AUG. 10. The Chief Election Commissioner, J. M. Lyngdoh, today gave a tongue-lashing to the district authorities here and chided them for not giving proper information on the situation after the recent riots.

Apparently questioning the conclusion drawn on the situation, a visibly-angry Lyngdoh asked the District Collector: "How are you saying that the situation has improved?"

"What kind of stories were you telling us over there," he retorted after the district officials said the people were returning home, while giving a briefing on the situation in the areas worst hit by the riots.

"The houses are all vacant. Are you not ashamed of yourselves?" Mr. Lyngdoh asked. — PTI

Gujarat officials taste CEC's wrath

Early polls unlikely in state

By Kingshuk Nag
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad/Vadodara: The utterances and body language of Chief Election Commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh in the last two days—both in public and closed-door meetings—clearly indicate that an early election is unlikely in Gujarat. Top civil and police officials got a severe tongue-lashing from Mr Lyngdoh at a private meeting on Friday, while on Saturday, the CEC reprimanded Vadodara's district collector and police commissioner in full public view.

Trouble for the state's top officials began the moment chief secretary G. Subba Rao opined that the "situation in the state is normal". "You call this normal; you have the temerity to say so," riposted the CEC. "Have you been to the relief camps?" he asked the stunned official. "I suggest that you go to the relief camps and stay there for two days."

A little later during the course of the hour-long meeting, Mr Lyngdoh's temper flashed again when the additional director general of police in charge of intelligence, R.B. Sreekumar, said, "If we have to hold elections in the state, we require more forces." Mr Lyngdoh looked at the chief secretary and remarked sharply: "Reconcile this for me. You say the situa-

tion is normal, yet you require more forces for polls?"

Additional chief secretary (home) Ashok Narain interjected at this point and said, "Sir, what he means is that..". The CEC cut him down immediately: "Does he require help from you for interpretation or translation?"

A top civil official present at the meeting told TNN: "We will have to wait for the Election Commission to come out with their clear views about the timing of elections, but going by the places visited by them and the way the meetings have been conducted, I have serious doubts that they will give the green signal for elections immediately."

On Saturday morning, Mr Lyngdoh gave Vadodara district collector Bhagyesh Jha a piece of his mind, blaming him for "not having complete information" regarding the Best Bakery tragedy.

A furious Lyngdoh, accompanied by his fellow ECs T.S. Krishnamurthy and B.V. Tandon, lashed out at Mr Jha as he fumbled to answer a question from him at Hanuman Tekri, where mobs had burnt 14 people alive inside the bakery on March 2.

"You don't have complete information. You talk about sporadic incidents. Where are the details? Are you not ashamed of yourself?" Mr Lyngdoh shouted at Mr Jha.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Lyngdoh finds riot victims' homes usurped by ruffians

By Sourav Mukherjee and
Amit Mukherjee
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

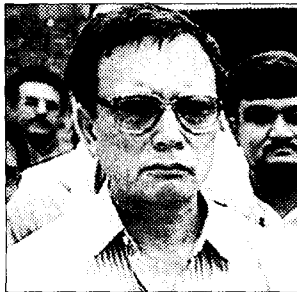
Ahmedabad: Sogan shouting crowds who were opposing early elections greeted chief election commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh and two other commissioners as they toured the riot affected areas and relief camps of Ahmedabad on Friday morning.

"First give us rehabilitation, then talk about election," said one banner at the Shah-e-Alam relief camp where crowds gathered to meet Mr Lyngdoh and two other ECs B.B. Tandoa and T.S. Krishnamurthy.

After touring the affected areas, Mr Lyngdoh told TNN "the situation in Gujarat looks quite delicate on the face of it, we have to gather some more impressions on this". Emotions boiled over at the Shah-e-Alam camp as inmates told Mr Lyngdoh and his two commissioners of their problems. Roshanbibi Mahboob Tamboli (65) told them how rioters had razed 10 houses at Juna Dhor Bazaar in Maninagar area

and how she was not being allowed to return to a house that she had lived her life in.

Without wasting a moment a decision was taken not to



J.M. Lyngdoh

proceed on the planned visit to Viramgam, a town 60 kms away. Instead, Mr Lyngdoh turned the motorcade towards Juna Dhor Bazar. On reaching the spot, it was found that Roshanbibi's claims were justified.

Her house has become forbidden territory for her. Safi Memon, organiser of the camp, told the EC team, "This plot of land on which a three-storey building has been built and the ground-floor quarter too belongs to Roshanbibi".

But, miscreants have re-

placed the entrance to the small courtyard leading to her house with a cement wall. Mr Lyngdoh duly took note of this occurrence as tenants peeped out of windows from flats above.

The on-the-spot surprise verification continued as they reached Gheewali Chali and six adjoining slums which are part of the Jamalpur assembly constituency. Local residents pointed out how 105 houses had been looted and burnt by mobs. "They don't allow us to reconstruct our houses or even our shops," said one.

The motorcade moved at a snail's pace to reach the Jhyasi Ram Ki Chali in Behrampura area. Here the enclave's entrance was found to be blocked by a shop named 'Jai Shree Ram pan parlour'. The EC team summoned the owner of the shop that was set up during the riots to prevent anyone from going back to their homes in the slum. A stammering Bholubhai Rajput, the pan shop owner, said "I don't sell anything from the shop. I have done nothing".

Haren Pandya's exit leaves Modi in the lurch

Anil Rana in Gandhinagar

GANDHINAGAR, Aug. 7. — The timing of Mr Haren Pandya's resignation yesterday has been nothing if not astute. For, with Assembly elections round the corner and the report of the Concerned Citizens' Tribunal probing Godhra and its aftermath on the anvil, Mr Modi might well have some explaining to do.

Pandya's denial to depose before the tribunal apart, the 27 February meeting called by the chief minister to allegedly allow the "backlash" of the VHP bandh, has once again become the talk-

ing point. And this charge will come in sharper focus when the tribunal's report is made public in a week's time.

The tribunal, headed by senior and respected retired judges, had held a series of hearings in Ahmedabad and other cities of Gujarat. It was stated that a senior minister of the Modi Cabinet, who "had a change of heart" deposed before the tribunal. Mr Modi suspected the minister to be Mr Pandya, and hence the showcase notice served last week, months after the actual deposition, if any.

This is where the "one man's stubbornness", which Mr Pandya talked of, while resigning, comes into play. Mr

Modi, despite not dropping the minister from his Cabinet, doggedly pursued his "victim". He refused to talk to Mr Pandya, walked out of meetings if Mr Pandya was present and generally made known his dislike for him.

For months, the state BJP president, Mr Rajendrasinh Rana, resisted pressure from the chief minister to serve a notice on Mr Pandya. He did not want to rock the boat in Gujarat.

The notice served under pressure, after a change at the highest level in the BJP, with a new party president in place insisting on discipline, the reply was received and seemed to satisfy.

The minister had denied having deposed before the tribunal. Mr Modi, however, was not satisfied with the explanation. Mr Pandya had accused him of running a one-man show, and the chief minister, according to Cabinet spokesman Mr IK Janaja, wanted Mr Pandya "to apologise or resign".

Mr Pandya put in his papers and they were immediately accepted. If Mr Modi thinks this is the end of Mr Pandya, he may not be quite correct.

After relations soured between the two, Mr Pandya had organised a convention at Ellisbridge, his constituency, which got a tremendous response. The

significant thing was that no one mentioned even the name of the chief minister at the meeting, and he himself was not invited. The message sent out loud and clear was "the party does not consist of one man". The state president, Mr Rana, had attended the meeting.

The Gujarat BJP now has three disgruntled ministers, among them Mr Keshubhai Patel and Mr Vajubhai Vala, a former revenue minister. The latest to join the bandwagon is Mr Pandya, known to be close to Mr Keshubhai Patel, who expressed "shock" at the resignation. Mr Modi now has to fight polls and also keep his flock together.

Navin faces revolt after expansion

K Ravi in Bhubaneswar

Aug. 6. — The much-awaited expansion of the Navin Patnaik ministry turned out to be an exercise to "rehabilitate" disgruntled leaders at the cost of those having a "clean image".

It also landed Mr Patnaik in further trouble, with veteran leader Mr Ramakrushna Patnaik resigning from the ministry and Mr Duryodhan Majhi, who was dropped from the ministry yesterday, lambasting the chief minister. This despite Mr Patnaik's attempts to preempt a revolt by saying that a there would be a "full-fledged expansion" within a few months.

It was not clear whether Mr Patnaik had accepted Mr Ram-

akrushna Patnaik's resignation. He has been shifted from the finance to agriculture ministry. As soon as the news of his resignation spread, several former ministers and MLAs gathered at his house to extend support.

He wrote in his resignation letter that the expansion had changed the public perception of the ministry, thereby hinting at the induction of "tainted" persons. He alleged that certain vested interest groups were trying to malign his image.

College students, reportedly at the instigation of Opposition parties, took to the streets across the city, raising slogans against the induction of persons having a "dubious track record". They also slammed the chief minister for expanding the Cabinet at a

PORTFOLIOS

Ramakrushna Patnaik:

Agriculture

Surendra Nath Nayak:

School and mass education

Mangala Kisan: *Water resources*

BP Agrawal: *Rural development, food and civil supplies*

PC Ghadei:

Health and family welfare

Surya Narayan Patro: *Energy*

Kalind Behera: *SC and ST development, minorities and backward classes welfare*

Damodar Rout: *Panchayati raj*

Panchanan Kanungo:

Minister of state for finance

time when the state was reeling under drought and power-cuts.

Mr Navin Patnaik looked un-

comfortable when asked whether he had dropped four ministers because of corruption or non-performance. "I told three of them (Mr Amar Sapathy, Mr DP Mishra and Mr Duryodhan Majhi) that they need to focus on party work. Mr AP Singh, the fourth minister dropped, has been ill since long," he said.

Mr Patnaik tried to defend his decision to drop the ministers by citing the example of the recent reshuffle in the Union NDA ministry in which some BJP ministers were brought back to the organisation.

But this didn't hold water because of the four leaders indicted, three have been successfully doing organisational work. They are Mr Damodar Rout, Mr Kalindi Charan Behera and Mr

Prafulla Ghadei.

The chief minister denied that there was any dissension in the party. Asked about the timing of the expansion (coinciding with the drought), he said he had restricted the ministry's strength to 25.

All the four new ministers (Mr Suryanarayan Patro is the fourth one), had cases against them and were acquitted only recently. Mr Ghadei was an accused in a murder case and the other three had cases of disproportionate assets slapped against them by the previous Congress government.

Mr Duryodhan Majhi alleged that Mr Navin Patnaik was "highly inexperienced" and was "entirely dependent" on bureaucrats. "He doesn't understand the problems being faced by the poor and the tribals."

Haren Pandya quits Cabinet

By Manas Dasgupta

GANDHINAGAR, AUG. 6. The Gujarat Minister of State for Revenue, Haren Pandya, resigned from the Cabinet here today, hours after the president of the State Bharatiya Janata Party declared as "closed" the controversy over his alleged appearance before a tribunal of retired judges probing the recent communal riots. The office of the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, confirmed that he had accepted Mr. Pandya's resignation.

The Minister submitted his

resignation to the Chief Minister in the evening with a request to relieve him of the ministerial responsibilities immediately. Just as he had done in his "clarification" to the notice issued by the BJP State president, Rajendrasinh Rana, Mr. Pandya hit back at Mr. Modi in his resignation letter also, in which he said that he was quitting the Cabinet as he did not want the "interests of the party to be harmed by an individual's whims and obstinacy."

Even as Mr. Pandya told presspersons that his decision was personal and had not been

taken under instruction from the party, the Cabinet spokesman and Urban Development Minister, I. K. Jadeja, claimed that Mr. Pandya was given two options — tender an "apology" for appearing before the tribunal or resign.

Both Mr. Pandya and the party president refuted Mr. Jadeja's claim.

Mr. Pandya said that he would not withdraw the resignation under any circumstances. "This is not a drama, this is for real. There is no question of my withdrawing the resignation under any circumstances."

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THE VERDICT IN GOA

5/6

THE BJP HAS just managed to retain power in Goa, where its Chief Minister, Manohar Parikkar, had embarked upon a snap poll two years ahead of schedule in a pre-emptive move to save his Government from perceived destabilisation threats. Not making it to the helm would have meant a huge loss of face for the party, its political embarrassment being much more acute because of the gamble it had taken in seeking a fresh mandate; this, of course, is apart from the ignominious prospect of being left with only Gujarat and two small States under its governance. In the event, the BJP finished with a tally of 17 seats (out of 40 in the House) to emerge as the largest single group, the Congress coming a close second with 16. Now, if the BJP has had little difficulty in making up the requisite majority in the Assembly, it is obviously because the smaller leader-centric regional outfits, namely the United Goans Democratic Party and the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (which together have five members), found the proposition of tying up with the BJP more attractive.

Substantively speaking, the Goa polls came to be invested with more interest than what normally attaches to the exercise in a State of its geographical size and political significance because of the new national context defined by the recent communally divisive developments in BJP-ruled Gujarat, triggered as they were just about the same time as Mr. Parikkar got the Assembly dissolved prematurely. In a calculated move, the BJP

raised its stakes high — and sharply — by striking a hard Hindutva line at its national executive meeting (held in Goa), what with the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, himself mounting a tirade against the Islamic community at a Panaji public meeting that virtually kicked off the poll campaign. For its part, the Congress did seek to focus on the Gujarat happenings and their disturbing implications for the country's secular ethos. At the end of the day, the question whether 'Gujarat' (and the BJP's ideological hark-back) has been a major determinant in the voter's choice is debatable; in a sense, the fractured verdict itself debunks any big swing one way or the other. Yet, there is a view that Mr. Parikkar's 'clean image' would have fetched more seats for the BJP but for the black deeds of the Narendra Modi regime.

It is indeed regrettable that the people of Goa have not given a clear mandate to either of the major contenders to power. But then, in 1999, they did give the Congress enough numbers to form a Government on its own strength and that had not guaranteed stability. If, on the contrary, the State had to witness a quick turnover of Chief Ministers, it had everything to do with the unprincipled floor crossings resorted to by the legislators unabashedly and with impunity. To be fair, this 'culture' permeates the State's entire political spectrum. One wonders if the punishment meted out by the electorate to at least some of the notorious defectors this time will bring about the necessary change in the political class.

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THE HINDU

Split verdict on Goa House dissolution

Press Trust of India

PANAJI, May 8. — The Goa Bench of Bombay High Court today delivered a split judgment — one in favour and the other against — on two separate petitions filed by the Congress leaders challenging the 27 February order of dissolving the Assembly by the Governor, Mohd Fazal.

The two-judge-Bench, comprising Mr Justice AS Aguiar and Mr Justice PV Hardas, gave different judgments, with former allowing the petitions and the latter dismissing the same.

The order passed by Mr Justice Aguiar stated: "The impugned order of the Governor (No G/2/2002/2881, dated 27 February 2002), dissolving the Goa Assembly suffers from legal malafides and is based on advice to dissolve the House, for a pur-

pose not authorised by law. The judge further observed that "the impugned order is an abuse of the power and, therefore, unconstitutional and deserves to be and is hereby set aside and quashed".

"Consequently, the order No G/2/2002/2882 dated 27 February 2002, continuing the chief minister and his council of ministers in power, is also required to be and is, hereby, set aside and quashed. Rule made absolute accordingly," Mr Justice Aguiar's judgment stated.

Mr Justice Hardas upheld the order of the Governor and dismissed the petitions. In the operative part of his judgment, he said: "In the result, writ petitions Nos 84 and 88 of 2002 are dismissed. Rule discharged, no order as to costs."

Citing the provision in Chapter One, Rule 6, of the manual "the Bombay High Court

(Appellate Side) Rules, 1960", court sources said that as per procedure, when both judges differ, the matter is referred to the Chief Justice of the country who then nominates a third judge for his opinion on the matter.

The provision cited by sources stated: "The point of difference of opinion between judges of a Division Bench shall be decided in the manner provided for in Section 98 of the Code of Civil Procedure or Section 392 of the Code of the Criminal Procedure as the case may be. "After the third judge to whom the reference is made has given his opinion, the matter shall be placed before the Division Bench, which had originally heard the matter and it shall pronounce the final judgment or order disposing of the matter."

The petitioners prayed for setting aside and quashing the Governor's order.

THE STATESMAN

9 May 2002

Poll panel team heads for Gujarat

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 29: A nine-member team of the Election Commission, including deputy commissioners A.N. Jha and S.K. Mendiratta, is leaving for Gujarat tomorrow to assess whether the state is ready for polls.

"They will start their work from Wednesday. After touring Ahmedabad, the team will visit other districts to assess how far normality has returned to the state, recuperating from prolonged violence," an official said. The team will

stay in Gujarat as long as it is required.

"The commission will review the existing situation and then decide on the poll schedule," the official added.

Another delegation of non-Congress Opposition MPs met the Election Commission today and pleaded against early polls.

The delegation included former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, senior CPM MP Somnath Chatterjee, former Lok Sabha Speaker P.A. Sangma, Samajwadi Party MP Amar Singh and Rashtriya Janata Dal MP Raghuvansh Prasad Singh.

In a three-page memoran-

dum, the delegation accused the BJP of trying to bully the commission into ordering early elections in a state, which they said, was far from normal.

"We told the commission they should decide the date of elections only after their team assessed the situation on the ground," said Chatterjee.

"We pointed out that sporadic incidents of violence are still occurring in Gujarat. Voters have lost their identity cards — they have no document verifying their identity," he added.

It is clear that the commission is not in a hurry to hold the polls, especially after a cross-se-

tion of people have repeatedly pointed out that the situation in Gujarat is not conducive for "free and fair polls".

Teesta Setalvad, co-editor of *Communalism Combat* who has been closely monitoring the situation in Gujarat, has written to chief election commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh, detailing instances of the Narendra Modi government's refusal to carry out proper rehabilitation of the displaced people.

Enclosing a special edition of the journal titled *Genocide Gujarat 2002*, Setalvad wrote: "I spent no less than six weeks in total in that hapless state touring

not just the metros but far-flung villages to document in detail the happenings."

Countering the BJP's claim that the Jagannath rath yatra, which recently passed off peacefully, was a yardstick of the state's return to normality, Setalvad said: "The yatra took place under strict security where only minority areas were searched and cleansed. No behavioural constraints were put on those found to be offenders. It shows that the state functioning under the current political dispensation continues to be partisan. And therefore unconstitutional."

Poll panel plans door-to-door survey

Thorn for Modi in roll revision

FROM MONOBINA GUPTA

New Delhi, July 24: The Election Commission will soon begin an "intensive" revision of electoral rolls in Gujarat and seven other states, setting off speculation that polls might be delayed in the riot-scarred state.

Even as it appeared that the commission was not in favour of hurtling into elections in Gujarat, a BJP team led by party president Venkaiah Naidu called on its members to press for early polls.

In Parliament, deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani aggressively defended Narendra Modi once again, saying: "In the last 50 years, I have seen many riots. No chief minister has controlled the riots more ruthlessly and effectively than Modi."

An intensive revision of electoral rolls means upgrading the voters' list after a door-to-door survey — an exercise that takes longer than a "summary" revision of rolls, not based on a door-to-door identification of voters.

The decision to revise the rolls was taken at a full meeting

of the commission, attended by chief election officers from Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. All the states are scheduled to go to polls within the next year.

"Revision of rolls is a long-drawn process and will be complete by January 1," an official said. The upgraded list will also include voters who become eligible to vote on January 1.

"It takes at least one to two months for the process of door-to-door survey to be complete," the official said.

The commission has just completed revision of the voters' list in Jammu and Kashmir, where elections are due in September, after it found the old list shoddy and illegible.

In Gujarat, door-to-door verification of voters will take even more time in the aftermath of the riots that have displaced thousands of Muslims. Many of the 20,000-odd people living in relief camps do not have a scrap of document to prove their identity.

But the BJP is keeping up the pressure for early elections.

After today's meeting, Naidu said the commission has promised to take a decision on the issue soon. Apart from the party president, the team that called on the commission members included Arun Jaitley, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, Anita Arya and Gujarat minister Ashok Bhatt.

In a memorandum submitted to the commission, the party said: "If certain extraordinary norms of normality are put, subjective opinions of democracy will derail the electoral process and that would be destructive for democracy."

As proof of normality in Gujarat, the BJP pointed to the 75 per cent turnout in the panchayat elections, the 98 per cent attendance in examinations and the celebration of festivals like Ram Navami, Shivratri and the Jagannath rath yatra. "Thousands of processions were taken out on the occasion of Muharram. These were all incident-free and nobody argued that the state was not normal," the party said.

But even if the commission agrees to hold early elections, the late monsoon could prove a spoiler for the BJP. (See Page 6)

Big Two star in Gujarat slanging match

Vaghela pulls out Amin ace

FROM BASANT RAWAT

Gandhinagar, July 22: Gujarat Congress president Shankersinh Vaghela today tried to keep the momentum going in his rejuvenated party by setting up a campaign committee under Narhari Amin, a strong Patel leader, and announcing a series of programmes to highlight the BJP's failure.

The Congress' steering committee decided at a meeting that the rallies and conventions would begin from August 4 at Deesa, where the party will demand that some parts of the state be declared drought-affected.

Vaghela, who had electrified the party by kicking off the polls campaign on July 17, a day before chief minister Narendra Modi recommended dissolution of the Assembly, is going all out to turn the party into a fighting unit.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, he said: "The rally is being organised in Deesa, a town in north Gujarat, to highlight the very serious problem of water and power which has affected farmers across the state." These are some of the burning issues that the Congress intends to focus on to puncture the BJP's claims of good performance in the last four years.

The Congress plans to observe August 9 — when Mahatma Gandhi had given the quit-India call to the British — as a "BJP hatao, Gujarat bachao" day. A huge rally will be held in Surat, Gujarat's diamond and textile hub, followed by a meeting with the business community.

On August 14, a youth convention will be held on the campus of Gujarat University. Every rally and convention will be addressed by senior Congress leader Kamal Nath, who is in charge of the state, and Congress president Sonia Gandhi's political secretary Ahmed Patel.

But Vaghela's masterstroke of the day was Amin's appointment. By bringing the strong

Patel leader in the limelight, he has set the BJP thinking. The only man laughing in the saffron party seems to be Keshubhai Patel, who will become indispensable. The BJP will now have to seek the help of the former chief minister, who is still sulking because of the humiliating manner in which he was pushed out for his alleged non-performance. Clearly, without his involvement, the BJP cannot win the strong Patel lobby, which can tilt the balance to either side.

There lies a catch. If Patel's help is required to win elections, the BJP will have to face embarrassing questions about why he was removed. Moreover, if he has to be involved, he has to be given an important post like president of the state BJP. The move could upset the Kshatriya community as Rajendrasinh Rana will have to be replaced. If Rana is removed and Patel refuses to work wholeheartedly, the BJP might get shocking results, admitted a senior BJP leader.

On the other hand, the promotion of Vaghela, a charismatic Kshatriya leader who is equally popular among Dalits, OBCs and tribals, has boosted the Congress' chances. "They (the workers) are fully charged and enthusiastic. This makes us believe that the Congress is going to come to power with a historic majority whenever the elections are held," said Kamal Nath, adding that the people of Gujarat would not be misled by Modi's diversionary tactics. The last six months have proved that his slogan of a "prosperous and safe Gujarat" rings hollow.

While reiterating that the Congress is prepared to face elections, the Congress leader maintained that the Election Commission must satisfy itself before notifying the poll. Considering that thousands of refugees would be not be able to vote, "we hope the EC will take a decision after taking into account all factors, the ground reality", he added.

UNITED WE STAND



Mulayam Singh Yadav, HD Deve Gowda and Laloo Prasad Yadav share a light moment in Parliament before launching the attack on the government. Telegraph picture

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 22: The dissolution of the Gujarat Assembly today paralysed proceedings in Parliament and united the Opposition both inside and outside the House.

The Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha were adjourned amid continuous slogan-shouting against Narendra Modi and for Central rule in Gujarat.

The Opposition also closed ranks outside Parliament with the Samajwadi Party announcing its decision to back the Opposition vice-presidential nominee, Sushil Kumar Shinde, after keeping the Congress and the Left on tenterhooks for three days.

Amar Singh said his party was supporting Shinde to "uphold secularism" in spite of being betrayed by them. Mulayam Singh Yadav, Sonia Gandhi, Somnath Chatterjee and others presented a happy and united picture minutes after they jointly sponsored Shinde's candidature.

In the Lok Sabha, Speaker Manohar Joshi ad-

joined the House for two hours when the combined Opposition clamoured for the suspension of question hour to discuss the dissolution of the Gujarat Assembly. After lunch, deputy Speaker P.M. Sayeed finally called it a day when the Opposition leaders showed no signs of relenting.

Throughout question hour, Joshi refused to yield to the Opposition demand for its suspension. Agitated members of the Congress, the RJD, Left parties, the Samajwadi Party and others stormed into the well, shouting, "We want 356 (imposition of President's rule under Article 356 of the Constitution)" and "*Modi hatao, desh bachao* (Remove Modi, save the country)".

Joshi reminded agitated members like Jaipal Reddy and Priya Ranjan Das Munshi of the Congress that question hour was last suspended in 1990, when both Opposition and treasury benches wanted it. When he sought the government's view, parliamentary affairs minister Pramod Mahajan categorically rejected it, saying "there is no question of suspension of question hour".

BJP counters Central rule call

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 22: The BJP has rejected the Congress demand to place Gujarat under Central rule while the Congress has contested the ruling party's insistence on holding Assembly elections in October.

In the slanging match that erupted between the two main players on Gujarat, the BJP argued that the state had returned to normal, the prerogative of chief ministers to dissolve their Assemblies whenever they wished was recognised by the Constitution and there were more controversial precedents to holding elections in states deemed as "disturbed".

"President's rule under (Article) 356 is imposed only when there is a breakdown of the constitutional machinery and when governance cannot be carried out in accordance with its provisions," said BJP spokesman Arun Jaitley.

Arguing that the Gujarat situation was "completely normal", Jaitley said the Congress demand for Central rule was "against the letter and spirit of the Constitution".

"Having recommended Assembly dissolution, elections are now not a matter of expediency but a part of the democratic process. Democracy is not a system where political parties must shy away from (the) people. On the contrary, it says when in doubt go back to the people," he maintained.

Jaitley recalled it was for this reason that when the Opposition cried for Narendra Modi's resignation, the BJP executive had turned it down at the Goa executive.

He debunked the Congress claim that the party was ready to face elections any time as "affecting a brave facade". "Each one of its statements and activities is intended towards avoiding elections," Jaitley alleged.

Countering the charge that the time was not ripe to hold an election in Gujarat because a large number of people continued to live in relief camps, Jaitley recalled that in 1983, in spite of a massive poll boycott call in Assam and a low turnout, the state went through with the exercise.

"In Punjab, at the height of militancy, there were repeated elections and in 1984, when 3,000 persons were massacred in Delhi, polls were held within 45 days," he said.

Jaitley iterated the legal argument that a state could not function indefinitely without an elected legislature and criticised the Congress for stalling Parliament over its demand.

"I repeat elections to Gujarat Assembly should be held expeditiously," Jaitley stressed and maintained that Article 174 made it clear that there should not be a gap of more than six months between two Assembly sittings.

The Gujarat legislature last met on April 6 and if elections were not conducted before October, it would amount to contravening this constitutional provision.

A Congress delegation led by the leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Manmohan Singh, which called on chief election commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh today, argued that Article 174 applied to a living and not a dead Assembly. The Gujarat Assembly was dissolved on July 18 and the invocation of Article 174 was a "grey area", even according to constitutional pundits.

The Congress' other point was that Article 324 gave the Election Commission all-encompassing powers to conduct and monitor elections, implying thereby that only the poll panel was in a position to take a holistic view of the Gujarat scenario, instead of just a legal one.

Minorities out of focus in Modi poll picture

FROM BASANT RAWAT

Ahmedabad, July 21: If the Gujarat Assembly elections are held in October as desired by chief minister Narendra Modi, a large section of the minority community may not be able to vote.

Not merely the 20,000-odd inmates residing in 10 official and an equal number of unofficial relief camps, but also hundreds of thousands of riot victims, who have either migrated from the city or are living in rented houses or putting up with relatives, will be deprived of their democratic right.

Camp organisers say it is next to impossible to rehabilitate all the inmates in two months. Even a section of the BJP opposed to early elections agrees with the Congress and the camp organisers that so long as there are refugees, the situation cannot be described as normal.

On paper, only 10 camps are functioning in Ahmedabad after some were shut down by the government to demonstrate that the riot victims were returning home. However, unofficially and

without government assistance, 10 more are operating. "The condition of some of these is bad," said Shauketkhan Pathan, secretary, Kaumi Relief Committee.

Election is the last thing on the minds of the riot victims still living in relief camps, partly because they have no expectation from it. In the last polls, many from the minority community had voted for the BJP, which had promised a riot-free state.

With the Congress taking up the cause of relief camp inhabitants who, without an address, might not be able to vote, those in charge of the camps — and speaking on behalf of the community — said they would ensure that the BJP is defeated.

The Congress has already brought the issue to the notice of Governor S.S. Bhandari. Tomorrow, it will narrate the situation to the Election Commission, which will decide when the elections are to be held.

Congress spokesman Has-mukh Patel said: "The ground situation is not conducive for holding elections. Not just because thousands of riot victims

are yet to be rehabilitated but electoral rolls have not been revised. The process is on and it will take a couple of months. Besides, only 1.25 crore people have voter identity cards. If elections are held without voter identity cards, there are chances of bogus voting."

Inamul Iraki, in charge of the Dariakhan Ghummat camp, which has 1,500 residents, said: "There is no question of these people participating in elections. Most of them have lost someone in their families, they have no home to return to and they are yet to get compensation."

At Shah-e-Alam relief camp, with over 4,000 people, Safibhai Memon said that even those who have left the camps have not all returned home out of fear. Many of those who have will be afraid of going out to vote.

Mohammed Hakimuddin Qasmi of Jamiat-Ulema-I-Hind Relief Committee suggested that the Election Commission should prepare a separate electoral roll for riot victims and give them voter identity cards.

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THE TELEGRAPH

22 JUL 2002

'CONG., LEFT ADOPTING DOUBLE STANDARDS'

BJP justifies move for early Gujarat polls

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 20. The Bharatiya Janata Party today rejected the Opposition demand for President's rule in Gujarat ahead of the Assembly elections and charged the Congress and the Left parties with adopting 'double standards' with regard to the decision to have early polls in the State.

A day after the dissolution move, the BJP president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, told a press conference here that, on the one hand, the Congress and the Left parties had stated that they were prepared for the Assembly elections and, on the other, criticised the Modi Government decision to go in for early polls.

"It shows their nervousness and unpreparedness. What is the rationale behind the double standards? Are they afraid (to face elections)" Mr. Naidu asked.

He claimed that instead of removing just one person (Mr. Modi) from power, the State Government recommended the dissolution of the Assembly to face fresh elections. "It requires moral courage."

On the Opposition demand for President's rule in Gujarat ahead of the Assembly elections, Mr. Naidu asked whether it could then be inferred that every State where elections were due next year should have a similar arrangement.

The Congress had different yardsticks — one for States where the party was in the Opposition and another where it was in power. Since Assembly elections were due in nine States, including Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, would the

Congress agree to bring these States under Central rule? "If so, we can discuss it," Mr. Naidu said.

Asked why the BJP was advocating President's rule in Jammu and Kashmir before the Assembly elections, Mr. Naidu said it had yet to take a stand and what was being articulated were the suggestions.

He scoffed at the appointment of Shankarsinh Waghela as the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee chief, a factor that is said to have contributed to the BJP advancing the Assembly polls. "Waghela who?" he asked and said: "We know him better and sympathise with the Congress, for it did not have a person to take on the BJP. It had to take a refugee from the 'parivar'".

Mr. Naidu announced the finalisation of work allocation for his new team. The details would be made public tomorrow, but specific responsibilities had been allotted in areas such as political affairs, public issues and people's problems, programme planning, implementation and monitoring, tour and coordination with the State units and focus on the affairs of SCs/STs and women. Separate teams for the media, elections and intellectuals would be formed.

He discounted reports of a change of guard in some States where Assembly elections are due.

Changes, if required, would be made after consultations with the State leaders and assessment by the central leadership.

The Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, meanwhile today appointed Suresh Pachauri and Pawan Bansal as AICC observers for the Gujarat elections.

Gujarat Cong. for President's rule

By Manas Dasgupta

GANDHINAGAR, JULY 20. The Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee today described as "unjust and improper" the decision of the Governor, Sunder Singh Bhandari, to allow the Narendra Modi Ministry to continue as caretaker government and has demanded the immediate imposition of President's rule in the State to ensure free and fair elections.

A five-member GPCC delegation, led by its former president, Amarsinh Chaudhary, called on Mr. Bhandari at the Raj Bhavan here today and raised the issue of large-scale transfer of Government employees just before the dissolution of the Assembly, with him.

The delegation alleged that the changes had been made "to facilitate the ruling BJP in the coming elections".

In a memorandum, the party said the Modi administration had put its "yes-men" at vital positions to misuse the provisions of the rules framed by the

Election Commission under which the returning officers had been empowered to reject a nomination paper if he finds any information provided by the candidate "unsatisfactory."

Pointing out that Gujarat might be the first State going to the polls under the new rules, the memorandum expressed the apprehension that the Modi administration might try to reject the nominations of important Congress candidates.

The transfers could be cancelled only if President's rule was imposed, it said adding that with the dissolution of the Assembly, Mr. Modi had lost the confidence of the House and that there was no justification for his continuation.

Drawing a parallel between the situation prevailing in Jammu and Kashmir and Gujarat, it recalled the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani's suggestion for the imposition of President's rule in Jammu and Kashmir for the sake of a free and fair election.

The same argument holds

ground for the imposition of President's rule in Gujarat as sporadic incidents of violence were still continuing in the State, it said.

Later talking to presspersons, the GPCC president, Shankarsinh Waghela, said his party would wait for the Governor's decision on their demands before contemplating the next step. He, however, ruled out the possibility of approaching a court of law on the issue.

The steering committee of the party and other senior leaders would meet in Gandhinagar on Monday in the presence of the AICC secretary in-charge of Gujarat affairs, Kamal Nath, and the political adviser to the party president, Ahmed Patel, to finalise the party's election strategy.

Meanwhile, Mr. Modi told presspersons in Rajkot today that the decision to dissolve the Assembly was taken long back but that he had waited for the peaceful completion of the 'rath yatra' and the Presidential elections before taking the step.

WITH AN EYE ON EARLY ELECTIONS

11/17-1
20/7

Modi resigns, gets Assembly dissolved

By Manas Dasgupta

GANDHINAGAR, JULY 19. The Gujarat Governor, Sunder Singh Bhandari, today dissolved the State Assembly and accepted the resignation of the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi. He has asked Mr. Modi to continue in office till alternative arrangements are made.

In a day of swift developments, Mr. Modi convened a special meeting of the Cabinet, which unanimously adopted a one-line resolution recommending to the Governor dissolution of the Assembly. Armed with the resolution, Mr. Modi along with some of his senior Cabinet colleagues called on the

Governor and handed over to him the resolution along with the resignation of his Ministry. Mr. Modi later told mediapersons that it would be for the Election Commission to set a date for elections, but claimed that there were precedents for holding early polls in such circumstances. He was hopeful that the State's request would be accepted.

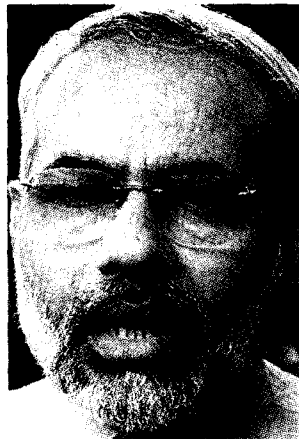
The Cabinet meeting was preceded by a similar one on Tuesday night which, however, refrained from taking any decision on dissolution of the Assembly and dispersed after discussing the problems arising out of the delayed monsoon. The State Congress president and Mr. Modi's arch rival, Shankarsinh

Waghela, while reiterating that his party was ready to face the elections any time, however, wondered about the "haste" with which the Assembly was being dissolved even when the Modi Ministry faced no threat. He demanded the imposition of President's rule in the State before the elections to ensure a free and fair poll. Asked about Mr. Waghela's appointment as the State Congress president, Mr. Modi said it was strange that the Congress had accepted "as its present" what was the "past of the BJP."

Mr. Modi was keen on going to the polls by June but was advised against it by the central leadership for various reasons. Besides, the party was doubtful of the EC agreeing to hold the elections at the height of the communal disturbances, particularly with thousands of riot victims living in relief camps. The leadership was also not prepared to risk losing the votes of the Assembly members in the crucial Presidential elections.

But with the peaceful completion of the Jagannath rath yatra, the end of the Presidential polls and the closing down of most of the relief camps for the riot victims, Mr. Modi may not encounter any other hindrance to early elections. He has also made his security adviser, K.P.S. Gill, relinquish office to impress upon the EC that the law and order situation is conducive.

'Forgive me'



GANDHINAGAR, JULY 19. The Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, has sought the "forgiveness of the people with folded hands" for any mistakes committed, either by his colleagues or him.

In a written statement here this evening, he said: "Governments will come and go — Chief Ministers will come and go. But Gujarat is eternal. To uphold the pride, prestige, and splendour of Gujarat, let us all march together".

— UNI

20 JUL 2008

Goodbye Gill, hello poll: Modi puts MLAs on notice

FROM BASANT RAWAT

Gandhinagar, July 15: The Jagannath yatra passed off without an incident; troubleshooter K.P.S. Gill bade goodbye today.

Peace reigns in Gujarat and there are signs chief minister Narendra Modi will recommend dissolution of the Assembly any moment.

He told BJP legislators today to get ready for elections, which could be held sooner than expected. Addressing a BJP legislature party meeting, the chief

minister said: "When the Congress is getting into election mode, the press is writing about it, why don't you understand that elections could be held early and we need to prepare for that?"

A senior MLA said this was the first clear indication from Modi that he could recommend dissolution of the Assembly as he wants to go to polls before Diwali.

The BJP national executive and the state unit have already authorised Modi to decide when

to dissolve the Assembly and he now only needs Cabinet approval.

An official in the chief minister's office said the Cabinet nod could come at a meeting on Wednesday or even earlier.

A police officer read Gill's departure — indicating to the world outside that Gujarat has returned to normal — as a sign that elections would be called now.

His exit was as mysterious as his controversial arrival as Modi's security adviser nearly

seven weeks ago. When Gill landed here on May 7, there was no one from Modi's Cabinet or office to confirm his appointment or to acknowledge that he was coming to restore peace in the riot-ravaged state.

Except a police officer, there was no one to receive him at Gandhinagar. Even the chief minister reportedly said: "I do not know why he is coming."

At his farewell party today, Modi presented Gill a bouquet and expressed hope that he would keep visiting Gujarat when-

ever his services were required.

Modi also expects Gill to strengthen the state's intelligence network. While Gill maintained a studied silence, the chief minister revealed that the retired police officer credited with breaking the back of militancy in Punjab had wanted to leave two weeks ago as he felt his assignment was over.

"But I asked him to stay till the Jagannath rath yatra. Now that the yatra has passed off peacefully, I relieved him and he is leaving for Delhi tonight."

Unlike the ritualistic back-thumping at other farewell parties, neither did Modi praise Gill for his services nor did Gill say anything nice about his assignment and association with the chief minister.

Gill, actually, refused to open his mouth. "I would rather write in newspapers. I will be paid for that, at least Rs 2,500 per write-up," he joked.

Gill had descended on Ahmedabad when no day passed in Gujarat without communal killing. His takeover was fol-

lowed by a complete overhaul of the police force that began to restore the confidence of the minorities in the administration.

At his initiative, a meeting was held among the leaders of the minority community, the Sangh parivar and the National Commission for Minorities.

For the first time after the riots, minority leaders met Modi, again largely because of Gill.

After the much-discussed Jagannath yatra — which had again raised fears in the minds

of the minorities about renewed violence — ended peacefully last Friday, the Shahi Imam of the city's Jama Masjid, Mufti Shabir Ahmed, praised Gill and his handpicked police commissioner, K.R. Kaushik.

"Gill's departure will not make any difference because the right officers are holding important posts in the city," Mohsin Quadri, a minority leader, said.

Police officers, who were unhappy when Gill took over, also believe his departure will not make a difference.

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AHD 1
'SUICIDE SQUAD' ARRESTED ✓ J. S. Chhajara

Ahmedabad rath yatra peaceful

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, JULY 12. The Gujarat administration, police and the people heaved a sigh of relief as the 125th rath yatra of Lord Jagannath ended peacefully in Ahmedabad today after passing through the sensitive traditional route amid unprecedented security. Reports said that the yatra was also peaceful in Bhavnagar, the second most sensitive city, Vadodara, and other major centres of the State.

The yatra, however, was not without hiccups. Even after a night-long combing operation in different parts of Ahmedabad, in which pistols and live cartridges were recovered and five persons arrested in the Dariapur locality, police continued to search sensitive areas before the "rath yatra" started and seized five local-made "rocket launchers," nine country-made guns, 12 live cartridges, 20 bombs and other equipment in Shahpur and arrested 10 persons, who the Crime Branch said, "belonged to some suicide squad."

Responding to the appeal of the police authorities, the size of the yatra was not only reduced to one-third, but the temple trust also ensured that the yatra was completed in time, with all the three main chariots returning to the temple before sunset. Normally, the rath yatra ends around midnight.



The Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, (centre) waves during the Jagannath yatra procession in Ahmedabad on Friday. — AFP

Steps were also taken to ensure that there was no provocative slogan-raising during the yatra, particularly in the minority-dominated localities. Blaring of loudspeakers, and playing of religious or patriotic songs along the 14-km circuitous route also helped submerge any slogan shouting. Besides large-scale deployment of police and para-military forces, including personnel of the Rapid Action Force, the Bor-

der Security Force and the Central Reserve Police Force, hundreds of plainclothesmen mingled with the crowd, keeping a strict vigil.

While many families belonging to the minority community in Dariapur, Shahpur, Jamalpur and other sensitive areas deserted their homes in the last few days, those who had no place to go stayed indoors in response to the appeal by the Muslim leaders to observe a

self-imposed "janata curfew." The rooftops of the buildings on the two sides of the narrow lanes, through which the rath yatra passed, were occupied by police. The yatra, flagged off by the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, and some other members of his Cabinet, at the Jagannath temple at 7 a.m. was received as usual by the leading citizens, Muslim leaders and members of the Communa Harmony Committee.

Yatra forces camp oustees to return

GANDHINAGAR, July 11. — Tomorrow's Jagannath Yatra has put a spanner in the rehabilitation of Muslim oustees in Gujarat. Nearly 3,000 people have returned to the Shah Alam camp, where they had been living after the February riots.

In Bhavnagar, security was tightened after police seized firearms from various areas of the city.

A resident of Shah Alam camp said: "Those who have come back include the oustees from Naroda-Patia who were in the process of returning to their homes after four months." The others are from Behrampur, Kankaria and Saraspur. Asked how long

will they stay, Mr Mehboob Khan, a resident in the camp, said: "We will decide after tomorrow." There were 1,300 oustees living in the camp and now another 3,000 have come back.

Twelve families from Ranip, Shahibang, Shahpur and Vadaj have returned to the Dariakhan Gummat camp. Mr Altaf, a camp organiser, said people claimed that they had seen Bajrang Dal followers carrying weapons such as *trishuls* and were scared to stay at home. The Dariakhan Gummat camp is already catering to 2,309 people.

• **Editorial: We are watching! page 4**

1 2002

Clergy tells Muslims to stay indoors during Rath Yatra

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: It is with an air of cocky confidence that the police is approaching the bandobast for Friday's Rath Yatra in the city which has the entire city on tenterhooks due to fears of a fresh outbreak of violence.

The Muslim clergy, in the meanwhile, organised a meeting of the community leaders on Wednesday, appealing to all Muslims to observe 'Janta curfew' on Friday, meaning that all Muslims should stay indoors along the route of the procession that will be guarded by some 15,000 policemen and security personnel. Another 15,000 policemen and paramilitary personnel will be deployed in the sensitive areas of the city.

The city police, which initially pleaded before the government to either ban the Rath Yatra or change its route to skirt the sensitive areas, has been forced to pull out all stops in preparing for the big event and even had an elaborate dress-rehearsal on Wednesday where details of huge se-

curity cover were ironed out. The entire route, in fact, turned into a sea of Khaki.

Leading the pack of policemen who believe that the Rath Yatra would pass off without much trouble is the security adviser to chief minister K.P.S. Gill himself, who told TNN, "The arrangements are such that there is no chance of trouble". Mr Gill himself took stock of the dress-rehearsal at Tambu Chowki, one of the most sensitive spots along the route.

The meeting held in the Juma Masjid here saw the clergy appealing to Muslims to stay indoors but there were signs of resentment, especially from the youth, that the Rath Yatra in such times of distress was just adding salt to injury. The clergymen, however, pointed out that there will be elements who would be looking for the slightest of excuse to foment trouble again and a self-imposed curfew was the best option under the present circumstances.

Several Muslim families have, in fact, planned to leave their localities

which fall along the route. In other areas like Punjabi Gali and Nagina Pole, residents have erected huge iron gates at the entrance to fortify themselves. Policemen will be posted on each roof-top along the route to prevent anybody from flinging bombs into the crowd. However, all these arrangements left Mohammed Saleem, who owns a building materials shop at Tambu Chowky, said "We are not convinced we are safe".

Additional commissioner of police, Satish Verma, who was touring the route throughout the day, said "Every detail of deployment has been worked out, we are not taking any chances. Other police officials, however, said that while they did not apprehend any major outbreak of communal violence, a terrorist strike on the Rath Yatra cannot be ruled out. In fact, these officials said even the culprits responsible for the serial blasts on city buses on May 29 had not been identified or arrested yet. "For such elements, this will be the best opportunity to strike", said a senior official.

THE TELEGRAPH

CHIEF MINISTER TO RETAIN ELECTION CARD

Gujarat *yatra* on track: Advani

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Crisis Net
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8/7

Statesman News Service

GANDHINAGAR, July 7. — The Jagnath *yatra* in Gujarat will not be called off despite the riots in Ahmedabad, Mr LK Advani said today.

The Deputy Prime Minister, who curtailed his visit to the state to fly to Mumbai and pay his homage to Dhirubhai Ambani, said since the *Yatra* was a grandiose religious festival, it would not be cancelled. "The government is making available more paramilitary forces," he said. The *yatra* is scheduled for Friday.

"In my 50 years of public life I have seen that more often than not communal riots are sparked off by trivial issues. They are difficult to control. The violence in Gujarat was caused by the horrendous incident ... at Godhra," Mr Advani said, adding that "vested interests" had kept the riots going after they had been curbed initially.

On Assembly polls, the Union home minister admitted that the situation was not yet normal in the state, but it was up to the Narendra Modi government to decide when it would hold elections.

To a query on whether there was going to be any change in Gujarat both at the government and organisational levels on the pattern of the reshuffle at the Centre, Mr Advani said: "even

state governments have to be innovative. Anyway, the (government's) term is coming to an end and they will have to face the electorate. They have to decide on when to hold the elections and what kind of governance they propose to give to the people."

While advising the Modi administration to concentrate on "good governance", Mr Advani said that "mere

it would have been to its credit but it didn't happen this way".

Asked if the "leaking" of the forensic report on Godhra has cast doubts on the belief that a mob had burnt down the Sabarmati Express coach, Mr Advani said "women, children and other passengers who were charred to death after the S-6 coach was set ablaze would not have killed themselves". The forensic report had said the windows of the coach were too high for inflammable liquids to be poured in.

The home minister said by bringing in Mr KPS Gill, the situation had been brought under control: "Mr Gill has done well to contain violence... he has grassroots experience."

Communal riots more often than not are caused by the most trivial issues. But what happened at Godhra was horrendous

restoration of peace is not normalcy".

"The people are still gripped by a sense of insecurity and complete peace and normalcy will said to have been restored in Gujarat when there is a sense of security among all sections of the people," he said.

The minister, however, gave credit to the chief minister for controlling the violence and said "the state government performed well to contain the violence. If it had fully controlled the situation within two or three days,

'Infiltration still rampant'

The Deputy Prime Minister said while infiltration from across the border had come down, "it had not stopped", adding that the idea of a joint patrol was given up as Pakistan disagreed with the proposal. He said it was not easy to assess infiltration but it could be known when infiltrators were either caught or confronted. "We will take our own time to assess infiltration from across the border," he said.

Pointing out that the government would complete 1,000 days in office tomorrow, Mr Advani said this was an indicator that the BJP was capable of following the coalition *mantra*.

Muslims desert homes as Jagannath rath yatra nears

By Manas Dasgupta

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AHMEDABAD, JULY 5. Wasim Khan, who is working with a non-government organisation in a riot relief camp here, has sent his family to the house of relatives in Karnataka. Nazir has already sent his children to Anand and now plans to shift his wife and other relatives there.

They are not alone, hundreds of panic-stricken Muslim families in Dariapur, Shahpur and other minority-dominated localities in Ahmedabad on the route of the Jagannath rath yatra on July 12 are moving out of Gujarat or to smaller towns or villages in the State.

There is apprehension that the rath yatra might spark another round of bloody riots in case the huge Hindu congregation is attacked at any point when the chariots pass through the communally-sensitive areas.

The fear has gripped even the Muslim-dominated localities in Juhapura from where some 200 families in six housing colonies, including the Anjum, Al-

Hamja, Aravali, and Sahewas Park societies, have moved out or are in the process of moving out till the yatra is over. Juhapura is far away from the yatra route but the people there are apprehensive because of an attack on them last month when even police allegedly sided with the hooligans to beat up the minorities, including women. A former Congress corporator, Farzan Khan, confirmed that a large number of Muslim families preferred to stay away from the city.

The organisers of the Muslim relief camps are worried that a large number of people might flock to the safety of camps as the yatra date approaches. Even after the State Government's efforts to forcibly close down all but three relief camps, at least 10 are still running on their own providing shelter to over 20,000 families because the inmates have refused to return to their houses till at least the rath yatra is over.

Mohsin Kadri, organiser of the Shah Alam Roza relief camp, by far the largest camp for the riot victims, providing

shelter to 7,000 people, admitted that there was widespread apprehension among the minorities over the rath yatra. Even the local police are aware of the large-scale shifting of the Muslim families from the rath yatra route and from Juhapura. Those in the mixed localities and who have no family friends and relatives outside the city, are, instead, flocking to Juhapura.

The yatra will pass through several sensitive areas covering a distance of 14 km from the Jagannath temple in the minority-dominated Jamalpur locality and back. While a kilometre-long procession includes a large number of trucks, camel carts, elephants and thousands of people on foot, two lakh devotees will witness the event. The yatra had provided the flash-point for violence several times in the past, particularly in 1985 and 1992.

Police intelligence has identified 17 highly sensitive points on the route from where it fears the yatra could be attacked. Hence, the police have requested the State

Government to prevail upon the Jagannath temple trust to either cancel the rath yatra this year or change the route. The temple trust, which was also under pressure from trade and business organisations as well as many prominent citizens, was initially willing to consider a change of the route but later changed its stand on the ground that this year being the 125th rath yatra, a change could hurt the sentiments of the people.

The security adviser to the Chief Minister, K. P.S. Gill, has also reportedly advised against cancellation of the yatra or a change of the route apprehending "unrest" among the Hindus. The chairman of the temple trust, Mahendra Jha, when approached today, said there was no question of changing the route though the temple had decided to reduce the number of trucks and other carriages in the procession.

The size would be cut by one-third to ensure that the yatra was completed before sunset. Normally, it is well past midnight when the chariots return to the temple.

"IN DEFERENCE TO NHRC'S WISHES"

Modi Govt. puts off 'gaurav rath yatra'

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, JULY 2. Forced by the party's central leadership, the Gujarat unit of the BJP has cancelled "for the time being" the "gaurav rath yatra" of the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, scheduled to begin from the holy town of Ambaji on Thursday.

The yatra was scheduled to be flagged off by the Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani. The party had planned to cover 125 of the 182 State Assembly constituencies in nine phases culminating with a rally in Ahmedabad on August 26.

"Uncalled for remarks" of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the opposition by the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, were

cited by the BJP as the reasons for the cancellation. But sources close to the party said instructions came from the Prime Minister's Office and the party high command in Delhi to cancel the yatra in view of the intelligence reports of the possibility of violence.

The party's State unit president, Rajendrasinh Rana, said the decision was taken in deference to the wishes of the NHRC. Though the commission had taken an "one-sided stand" without seeking clarifications from the party about the yatra, which was intended to create "an atmosphere of communal harmony, confidence and peace," the party decided to cancel the programme because of "our high regard and respect

for a democratic institution like the NHRC."

Mr. Rana said following the NHRC report, he had a talk with Mr. Modi in Gandhinagar this afternoon and "we both decided to cancel the yatra due to the apprehensions expressed by the commission."

He, however, maintained that neither the party nor the State Government felt that the yatra could lead to any violence, but apparently was apprehensive because the Congress had chosen to make it a "political issue".

Jagannath yatra as scheduled

About the NHRC's comment on the Jagannath Rath Yatra on July 12, Mr. Rana said it was a

religious tradition and would go ahead. There was no question of the Government forcing the Jagannath temple trust to cancel it as it could hurt the religious sentiments of the people.

The State Congress president, Amarsinh Chaudhary, welcomed the BJP's decision to cancel the Gaurav Rath Yatra. Stating that it was a "good decision", he said it had upheld the Congress stand that the yatra in such surcharged atmosphere could again lead to violence.

The Congress also cancelled its own "rath yatra" which was to follow the same route of Mr. Modi's yatra a week later to "wash out" the BJP influence.

Some BJP sources, however, said the NHRC's apprehension of large-scale violence was not unfounded as the yatra was planned to be taken through some sensitive areas with provocative slogans and speeches which could have disrupted the hard-earned peace in the State.

Mr. Modi's critics within and outside the party maintained that the decision to cancel the yatra was a "rebuff" to him. Mr. Rana, however, did not believe that the cancellation indicated the party's weakness or a rebuff to its campaign.

On the contrary, he criticised the Congress and Ms. Gandhi for making it a political issue. It had become a "fashion" with Ms. Gandhi to paint the people of Gujarat as "blood-thirsty violent" and defame Gujarat even though there had been no violence during her four rallies in the State since the Godhra carnage and no disturbances in the village panchayat elections and the month-long dharna held by her party in the State.

"The people of Gujarat are waiting for an opportune time to give a fitting reply to her attempts to paint Gujarat black," he said.

PM'S INTERVENTION WORKED

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, JULY 2. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, is reported to have impressed upon the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, to make the State BJP reconsider its decision to take out a 'gaurav rath yatra'. Later, Mr. Vajpayee informed a delegation of NGOs and concerned citizens, led by the former Prime Minister, Inder Kumar Gujral, that the 'yatra' was off.

The proposed 'yatra' was scheduled to begin on July 4 in various parts of Gujarat. The idea was to celebrate the "new mood of assertiveness" in the majority community after the recent communal carnage. The Chief Minister himself was to lead one of the 'yatrass'. Critics of the State Government and the BJP were apprehensive that the 'yatra' would needlessly vitiate the atmosphere.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Monday warned the State Government against the 'yatra'. The Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, also wrote to the Prime Minister last week, drawing his attention to the 'incendiary potential' of these 'yatrass' all over Gujarat. Today the former Cabinet Minister, Ram Vilas Paswan, staged a dharna in Ahmedabad against the 'yatrass'. On the other hand, the State Government was so far maintaining that these 'yatrass' were intended to inculcate a 'mood of peace' in the minds of the people of riot-torn Gujarat.

It appears that this morning Mr. Vajpayee called up the Union Home Minister, Lal Kishan Advani (who was, according to one report, scheduled to flag-off the Modi 'yatra'), and indicated to him that the 'yatra' was, after all, not such a good idea. This view was immediately conveyed to Mr. Modi who, in turn, rang up the Prime Minister to inform him that the programme was being cancelled. Mr. Vajpayee made the intervention after presiding over a meeting of

senior officials from Gujarat, where he was informed of the nature of the relief and rehabilitation efforts undertaken so far. Besides the Prime Minister, the Cabinet Secretary and senior officials from the Prime Minister's Office attended the meeting, while Gujarat was represented by the Chief Secretary, Subba Rao, the Relief Commissioner and the Collectors concerned. The Prime Minister wanted to be briefed on the State Government's relief measures before the Gujral-led delegation came.

However, it was during this meeting that the Prime Minister could infer from the State officials' remarks the intended mischief in these 'gaurav yatrass'. The implications of the Chief Minister's association with the exercise were also perhaps obvious. Mr. Modi and his colleagues continue to show no remorse over the unprecedented communal violence that engulfed the State after the Godhra incident.

In the evening the Gujral delegation included, among others, prominent citizens such as Muchkund Dubey, B.G. Verghese, Rajinder Sachar and Harsh Mander. The delegation came with a specific request that the relief camps should not be closed down and that the riot-victims should not be forced to go back to their homes.

It was pointed out to the delegation that the State Government was apprehensive that some of these camps were likely to get inundated in the ensuing monsoon season and therefore it had made an offer that the riot-victims could move to other camps. However, the delegation voiced the victims' preference to stay in camps closer to their homes. Eventually, it was agreed that no one would be forced to move out of the relief camps against his/her wish, but it was decided that the some of the NGOs involved in the relief work would associate themselves with the State Government's efforts to see which of the camps would be feasibly sustained.

Don't close relief camps: Governor

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, JUNE 21. The Gujarat Governor, Sunder Singh Bhandari, has informed the State Congress that he had issued instructions to the State Government not to close down the relief camps for riot victims without making alternative arrangements for them.

The Governor's response comes in the wake of a letter by the three Congress members, the State Congress president, Amarsinh Chaudhary, the Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly, Naresh Raval, and a member of the State Assembly, Siddarth Patel, in the All-Party Committee for Relief, saying that they would be compelled to resign from the committee if corrective measures were not taken immediately.

Pointing out that in some cases the victims had been paid a meagre amount as compensation, the members demanded a re-survey of the affected houses and industries damaged in the riots.

They said no camp should be closed down till the last of the inmates were resettled in their houses with proper compensation.

Mr. Chaudhary said they had not yet withdrawn the letter, because despite the Governor's assurance, the State officials were still moving round the relief camps forcing them to close down.

The 14-member committee was set up at the behest of the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, under the chairmanship of the Governor with representatives of major political parties and prominent citizens to instil a sense of confidence among the minorities for a fair deal.

The Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, heads the BJP group in the committee, which also includes his second-in-command in the Cabinet, the Industries Minister, Suresh Mehta.

The State Government had on Monday ordered the closure of eight relief camps in Ahmedabad, though the inmates are yet to receive any compensation to repair or reconstruct their riot-hit houses.

22 JUN 2002

THE HINDU

More relief camps ordered closed

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, JUNE 17. Even as the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, claimed "satisfactory progress" in the relief and rehabilitation of the riot victims in the State, the Muslim victims have taken to the agitational path to highlight the Government's "broken promises" and their "unfulfilled demands."

About 500 such victims observed a day's token fast and staged a 'dharna' in front of the Sardar Baug in the heart of the city under the auspices of the Qaumi Relief Committee to protest the "tardy" implementation of the Chief Minister's assurances.

But even before the dharna was over, the victims suffered yet another jolt with reports that the Government had decided to close down at least eight more relief camps in Ahmedabad. Though there was no official notification, the committee's general secretary, Shaukatkhan Tyrewala, claimed that they had been informed by the Collectorate that essential supplies to eight more camps would be suspended forthwith on instructions from Gandhinagar.

Considering that there was a huge gap between the figures quoted by the Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani, on Sunday and what was claimed by Mr. Tyrewala today about the number of relief camps still in operation and the inmates living in the camps, it was not clear which camps the Government proposes to close down.

Quoting the State Relief Commissioner, Mr. Advani had claimed that with a large number of riot victims returning to their homes, the number of relief camps had come down from 121 with about 1.5 lakh inmates to 19 sheltering about 18,500 riot victims at present. This included 12 camps in Ahmedabad with 15,300 inmates.

Rejecting Mr. Advani's statistics, Mr. Tyrewala claimed that 22 camps were still in operation in Ahmedabad sheltering about 49,000 people.

In addition, about 17,000 victims were still staying with their relatives and friends as they were unable to return to their

homes for various reasons. The committee had planned to launch a dharna on the Collectorate premises if the eight camps were "forcibly" closed.

Mr. Modi, however, rejected the panel's claim that the Government had failed to implement the promises he had made earlier during a meeting with the minority leaders.

Senior officials had been deputed to carry out the relief and rehabilitation works and the Union Cabinet Secretary himself was monitoring the progress every week.

"Each of the assurances is being implemented sincerely and the progress is satisfacto-

ry," he added. The agitating minority leaders, however, differed.

According to Mr. Tyrewala, not one of the promises had yet been fulfilled or their demands accepted.

In the name of rehabilitation, the Government had been providing as little as Rs. 15, Rs. 50 or Rs. 100 for repairing damaged houses and in no case was the amount sanctioned more than Rs. 4,600 a house.

"Those who want to return to their houses could not carry out even 10 per cent of the repair work required with such meagre sanctions," he complained.

Shutdown nail on Gujarat camps

Minorities flay 'callous' Modi

FROM BASANT RAWAT

Ahmedabad, June 17: The Narendra Modi government today ordered the closure of eight relief camps in the city, upsetting the minority community and its leaders who appear headed for a showdown with the administration.

The sudden order is expected to affect about 10,000 riot victims who would no longer be entitled to free ration. Moreover, the organisers of these camps will now have to make fresh arrangements for the inmates who have nowhere to go.

The camp organisers and community leaders, who today staged a day-long dharna to highlight the government's "callous attitude towards the riot victims" and "inadequate compensation", said they would launch a statewide agitation against the Modi government. They alleged that the administration was pressurising them to close down the relief camps so that early elections could be held in the state.

Minority leaders said the government was in a hurry to close down the camps because even if there was

one relief camp functioning, the chief minister would find it difficult to project that the state had returned to normal.

"We have no option but to launch a stir," said Khalid Shaik, a camp in-charge. "To begin with, we will soon hold a rally which will be joined by all the riot victims. Since the government has closed down eight camps, inmates of these eight camps will have no option but to camp at the collectorate compound."

With the chief minister eager to hold early elections, there is tremendous pressure on the camp organisers to send the inmates to "their respective homes" — a fact confirmed by Ataulah Khan, in-charge of the Dariyakhan Ghummat relief centre.

As many as 14 families who

had been living here have returned home in Naroda Patia. The state government is projecting this as a major achievement. If 14 families could return to one of the worst carnage sites, so can others, government officials claim.

But Khan said "it is nearly impossible". The 14 families, he explained, could return home because their houses were not burnt and their Hindu neighbours were in constant touch with them. The neighbours, he added, had been visiting the camp regularly to meet them and insisted that the inmates should return. There are still 200 other residents of Naroda Patia living in the Dariyakhan Ghummat.

According to Khan, those still living in the camp were so traumatised that they would not dare to return to Naroda Patia even if their houses were rebuilt. They would have to be rehabilitated elsewhere, he said.

One of the demands at today's dharna was an alternative rehabilitation site for the riot victims of Naroda Patia and Gulbarg Society. The demand was raised by the Kaumit Relief Committee.

The state government, however, refused to concede the demand on the ground that it would lead to ghettoisation.

A senior official in the chief minister's office claimed that the government was not exerting any pressure on the camp organisers to close down the relief centres. "It is all voluntary. Those who have left the camps have left voluntarily," he said.

At a press conference, Modi refused to say any thing on why the eight camps were closed down. Instead, the chief minister harped on how he got Central assistance worth Rs 1,123.88 crore sanctioned.

"I am implementing what had been promised. The cabinet secretary is regularly monitoring the progress of relief and rehabilitation," he said.



A mass wedding being held at a relief camp in Ahmedabad. (PTI)

Good boy at PMO, bad at home

FROM MONOBINA GUPTA

New Delhi, June 17: Narendra Modi is portraying two sides to his persona. Every time the Gujarat chief minister is summoned to the Prime Minister's durbar, he plays the role of a dutiful pupil, listening to the reprimand from the Prime Minister on his failure to deliver relief to the victims of violence. However, once back home, Modi continues to do what he does best — deny justice to the victims.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the state government's compensation scheme for riot victims. Volunteers of Aman Ekta Manch and Citizen's Initiative — two non-government organisations involved in rehabilitation work in Gujarat — dismiss the compensation as a "joke". People who have lost

their homes and all their possessions in the riots are routinely handed cheques of Rs 300 to Rs 500, they say.

"There are villages that look like they have been bombed. Everything is devastated. Most victims have got no compensation," says Nivedita Menon of the Aman Ekta Manch, who has just returned to Delhi after working in Watva Dargah for seven days.

Supriya from Citizen's Initiative, who has been working with the victims for the last five months, points to two State Bank of India cheques handed out by the Modi government to two claimants of compensation. Shah Nawaz (name changed), who lost a house worth Rs 80,000 and possessions worth Rs 55,000, got a cheque of Rs 500. Ahmed (name changed), who had his Rs

1 lakh house razed to the ground and belongings worth Rs 55,000 destroyed, got Rs 450.

"The government's main aim now is to wind up these camps — many of their ration quotas have been slashed," says Supriya. At Watva Dargah camp, the authorities have not bothered to carry out a proper headcount — a duty they are expected to fulfil.

"The officers on duty stay in the camp for half-an-hour when they are expected to stay there from 10am to 6pm. He just looks around and reels out a number of the camp inmates. There is no proper headcount," says Nivedita.

The authorities have a vested interest in keeping down the headcount — it helps them to keep low the quota of daily rations. In many camps, the rations are fast running out and

the conditions are expected to worsen with the onset of rains. The inmates at Watva Dargah camp have a flimsy shamiyana over their heads, which will not hold out in a downpour.

The state's intervention in rehabilitation is almost non-existent. For the victims, the only hope lies in community initiative and some 30-35 NGOs that are working in the camps. The Aman Ekta Manch has volunteers coming in from all over the country to work in these camps. Action Aid India has given a call to youths, the Aman Pathiks (Peace Volunteers) to extend a helping hand.

These volunteers provide succour — whether by telling children stories or extracting compensation from the authorities or by just listening to the victims recall their horrors.

GUJARAT SCENE / MUSLIM PANEL TO STAGE DHARNA TODAY

Advani satisfied with Modi Govt.

By Our Special Correspondent

AHMEDABAD, JUNE 16. Even as some Muslim organisations are planning to launch a dharna in Ahmedabad tomorrow to protest against the "inadequate" efforts of the Gujarat Government to rehabilitate the riot victims, the Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani, has expressed "satisfaction" over the performance of the Narendra Modi administration in this regard.

Talking to mediapersons here today, Mr. Advani said he was "satisfied" with the progress made by the State Government in rehabilitating the riot victims and the affected people had started returning home. He claimed that at one time, about 1.50 lakh victims were living in 121 relief camps in various parts of the State but now it had come down to about 18,500 people in only 19 camps.

He said the remaining camps could be closed down because the people had returned home. To establish that normality had returned all over the State except for some parts of Ahmedabad, Mr. Advani said 12 relief camps were still running in Ahmedabad city providing shelter to 15,300 people. There were only about 3,200 people in seven camps in other parts of the State.

Expressing happiness that the State had by and large remained incident-free in the last four weeks except for some sporadic incidents in Ahmedabad, Mr. Advani, however, said it was not enough and asked the State Government, the social leaders and the people at large to work unitedly for restoring "harmony, amity and trust"

among the people for a lasting solution to the problem.

Unless the people developed confidence and trust in each other, real peace would never come. "It is a difficult task but all need to make concerted efforts to achieve the goal," he said.

Mr. Advani agreed that initially the riot victims were reluctant to return to their homes, but decided to leave the camps only after the State Government convinced them that they would continue to get financial help at their own places. "The government's efforts for rehabilitation is satisfactory," he added.

The Qaumi Relief Committee created recently to hold negotiations with the State Government for the relief and rehabilitation of the riot-affected Muslims, however, held a different view.

The committee has planned to hold a dharna in the city tomorrow to draw the Government's attention to its "broken promises and unfulfilled assurances." The committee general secretary, Shaukatkhan Pathan, said the dharna was in accordance with the "ultimatum" the panel had given earlier to the Government to start implementing the promises given to it by the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, earlier.

Even 15 days after the serving of the ultimatum, there was no improvement in the situation and the Government had not taken any step to show that it was keen to implement the promises given by Mr. Modi last month, Mr. Pathan said. "We have no other choice but to launch the dharna to remind the Government of its promises," he said.

INDO
1 / JUN 2007

Advani leaves decision on polls to Modi

TIMES NEWS NETWORK AND
AGENCIES

Ahmedabad: Union home minister L.K. Advani said on Sunday that it was up to the Gujarat government to decide on holding early assembly elections.

"When the party chief and the chief minister have already given their views, how can I comment on it?" he told presspersons here when it was pointed out to him that BJP president Jana Krishna-murthy and CM Narendra Modi favoured early polls.

The law and order situation in Gujarat was improving and no major incident had been reported in the last few weeks, he said. However, the state government and society should make concerted efforts to instil a sense of security among the people, he said. Peace and communal harmony should be restored at any cost, he added.

Referring to cross-border terrorism, he said India had succeeded in creating world opinion against Pakistan as an exporter of terrorism. He said that in the changed scenario, the US, the UK and Russia had publicly acknowledged Pakistan's hand in sponsoring terrorist activities in India.

British foreign secretary Jack Straw and American defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld had spoken about Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in India when they visited Islamabad, he said. "This is one of the most important developments in the last three weeks."

But despite the diplomatic success, "we cannot afford to let our guard down and must be alert about the situation across the border," he said.

The home minister said India was prepared to have a dialogue with Pakistan only if Islamabad stopped cross-border terrorism and dismantled all training camps locat-

- 'Law and order situation in Gujarat improving'
- 'India has managed to create world opinion against Pak'
- 'No reduction in cross-border terrorism so far'
- 'UN resolution on J&K has lost relevance'

ed across the border.

"Our intelligence reports indicate that there has been no reduction in cross-border terrorism and terrorists are being trained at 70 camps situated in Pakistan and PoK," he said.

Mr Advani said the Lashkar-e-Toiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed were the two most active terrorist organisations in Jammu and Kashmir. Clarifying that it would be wrong to presume that these organisations were confined to J&K alone, he said they were trying to spread their tentacles to other parts of the country also.

He said the outfits already had a base in Nepal and "we have informed the Himalayan kingdom about the organisations".

Terming terrorism a "terrible curse and evil", Mr Advani said the September 11 attack had made the world sit up and take notice of the goings-on in Jammu and Kashmir.

Stating that even Pakistan was forced to condemn the Kaluchak attack, he said it was a different matter that the state-owned Pakistan Radio now said the attack had been masterminded by Indian agencies.

Dismissing a plebiscite in Kashmir—despite a recent independent poll showing that a majority of the people wanting to stay with India—Mr Advani said the United Nations resolution had lost its relevance.

Fresh riots in Ahmedabad

Raveen Thukral
Ahmedabad, June 9

INDEFINITE CURFEW was reimposed in parts of the city following fresh violence that left at least two people dead and more than twenty, including policemen, injured. The condition of at least three people injured in police firing was stated to be serious.

Trouble erupted in the volatile Muslim-dominated areas of Juhapura this afternoon after the arrest of two people of the minority community in connection with some earlier cases registered against them. Agitated residents gheraoed the local police station and indulged in brick-battling and allegedly lobbed crude bombs. The police retaliated by firing, lathi-charge and lobbing tear gas shells to disperse the angry mobs. The fleeing crowds allegedly pelted stones on some vehicles and tried to set some on fire in Gupta Nagar and Vaitalpur.

The trouble, which began as a protest, soon took a communal turn with the mobs turning their fire to the members of the other community. A truck driver was killed when his vehicle was

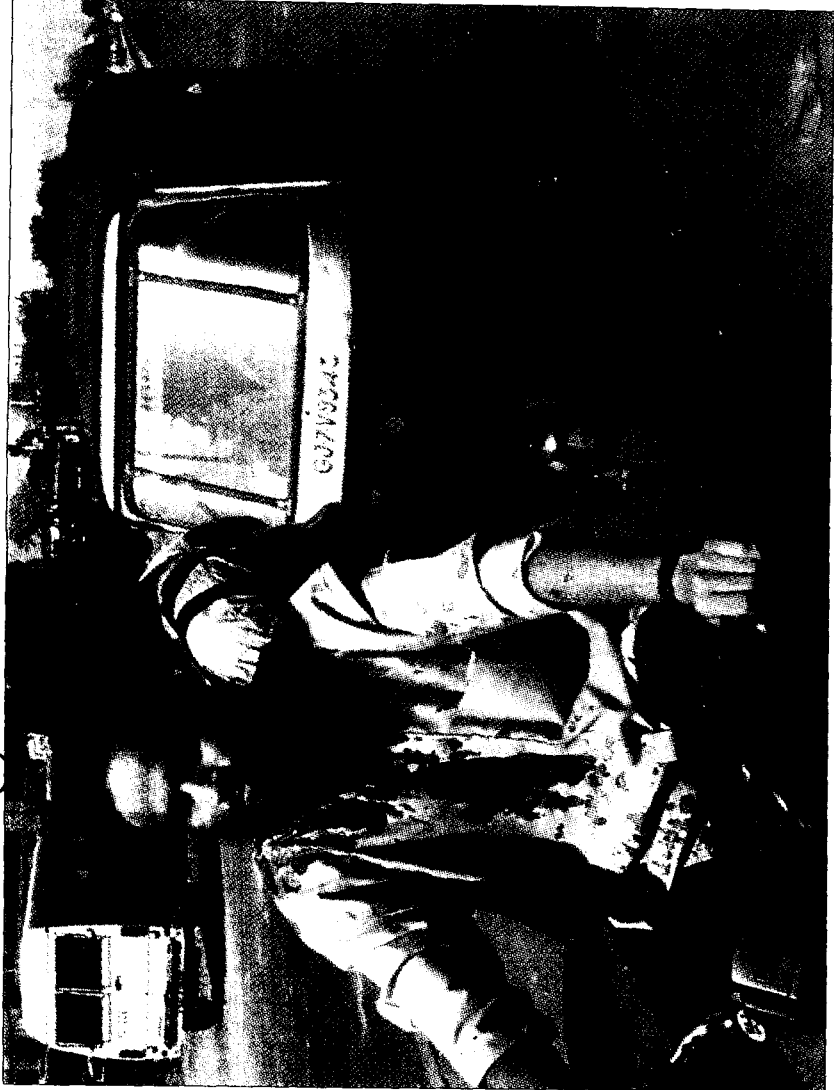
Mahashweta wants CBI probe

MAHASHWETA DEVI on Sunday demanded the implementation of the National Human Rights Commission recommendations on the Gujarat carnage. She also demanded a CBI inquiry into the cases of arson, loot, rape and murder during the three months of violence in Gujarat. The writer was speaking to journalists at the Press Club of India in Delhi after a trip to Gujarat. She described the riots as a "well planned and executed pogrom."

HTC, New Delhi

stoned by the mob. Unconfirmed reports said a few people were stabbed near Anjali Cinema Hall in Gupta Nagar.

Additional Commissioner Satish Sharma said the trouble was sparked off by the arrest of Mohd Arif alias Gachi and Mohd Hussain alias Babloo. Sources said an unidentified person, who



A motorcyclist has his shirt splashed with blood in Ahmedabad's Juhapura area, where fresh riots broke out on Sunday.

was allegedly stabbed, succumbed to injuries at V S Hospital.

Sharma said several arrests had been made in connection with today's incidents.

While police said that about 12 people, including three police-

men, were injured, local residents put the figure at 35.

According to Badruddeen Sheikh, Chairman Standing Committee AMC, several people were injured in subsequent incidents of stabbing also. He said majority of the people were in-

jured in police firing and lathi charge. He said the injured had been admitted to V S and Irka hospitals.

Police officers said after the incident curfew was re-imposed in Juhapura and BSF personnel were deployed there.

Modi goes back on mosque vow

Raveen Thukral
Ahmedabad, June 9

GUJARAT CHIEF Minister Narendra Modi in a total flip-flop has said the Government would provide no funds for rebuilding the shrines that were damaged in the recent riots. The turnaround is presumably under pressure from Hindutva organisations.

Contrary to his assurances to the commission for minorities and Muslim leaders last month, the Chief Minister now says that allotting funds for such purposes is against the Constitution.

Modi, who met about 100 riot victims from the worst-affected areas of Naroda Patia, Best Bakery and Panwad on Friday evening, said non-political organisations should be involved in raising funds for rebuilding the damaged shrines.

Modi may now fall back on the Constitution to justify his volte face, but it is also probably significant that his earlier announcement to rebuild the shrines had come under a lot of criticism by the VHP and Bajrang Dal. Admitting that VHP and Bajrang Dal had played a major role in Modi's change of stance, a senior BJP minister said: "He appears to



Narendra Modi
Flip-flop

be confused".

Modi has also denied allotting any land for rehabilitation of riot victims on the grounds that this would encourage formation of new ghettos. This assumes greater importance since the Prime Minister himself had suggested relocation of Muslim families who cannot return to their old homes.

Though the Chief Minister may be right in saying that such a move would encourage ghetto culture, observers feel this could be the only way to rehabilitate some victims.

SATURDAY, JUNE 1, 2002

DISQUIETING INCIDENTS

THE ERUPTION OF violence over the past few days, disrupting the palpably uneasy quiet that was descending on traumatised Gujarat only goes to show that the path to restoration of normality in the State is riddled with landmines. Ominous indeed is that several of the cities and towns affected by the recent disturbances are precisely the ones that had suffered the most in the three-month-long mayhem — Ahmedabad and Vadodara, for instance. And Godhra, which had remained largely unaffected by the orgy of mindless communal killings that followed the grisly Sabarmati Express torching episode of February 27, has also figured in the latest spell of violence; two persons were killed in the police action. At work are, clearly, forces that have a vested interest in perpetuating, and possibly even deepening, the communal cleavage and therefore want to frustrate all endeavours towards restoration of public peace and order, not to speak of harmony.

Theories abound as to the identity and motivation of the culprits behind the bomb blasts that occurred almost simultaneously in three different buses in Ahmedabad last Wednesday. On the face of it, the low technology-level of the explosive device employed points to the hand of some local elements who are bent upon sending a message or two to the Government and its beefed-up law enforcing agency under the 'super cop' K.P.S. Gill. The spokesman of the Narendra Modi Ministry lost no time in calling the blasts a "terrorist act" and, what is more, in seeing a motivational nexus between it and the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf's May 27 speech. Equally quickly have also come allegations of the temporal proximity between the blasts and the arrest of some Sangh Parivar activists for their alleged involvement in a rioting case. Significantly, the revived violence in Godhra also has followed the filing of charge-sheets in the Sabarmati Express burning case.

Clearly, the security agencies have to put their act together fast and crack down on the subversive elements, whatever be their religious complexion, so that the message goes out loud and clear, and this acquires an urgency in the wake of the recent withdrawal of armed forces from the State for redeployment on the India-Pakistan border. Media reports suggest that, on top of the badly ruptured communal harmony, the uprooting of thousands of families — which also meant an army of jobless youth — and the availability of demolished structures in the riot-hit areas have combined to turn bomb-making into a flourishing 'industry'; the seizure of huge stocks of explosives the police are reported to have effected during raids in the past few days only lends credence to it. In the immediate context, some quick strategic initiatives are called for to meet the new challenge, if what little progress that has been made so far towards the limited goal of "cessation of violence" — as Mr. Gill would like to describe his mandate — is not to be reversed. Particularly worrying are his statements (in a media interview) about possible "retaliatory terrorist attacks" and the Gujarat police's lack of equipment and training to deal with such a contingency.

More fundamentally, the fact that every act of subversion and heinous crime against civil society in the current Gujarat context has come to be reckoned in communal terms, with the majority and minority communities blaming each other, testifies to the highly divisive 'us' versus 'them' fixation. The gravity of the situation enjoins on civil society in general and the political class in particular to address the cankerous issue in all the seriousness it warrants, and this rules out any electoral contest for power which inevitably brings into play an array of divisive factors. Given that the proximity of the Assembly elections has in a way compounded the problem in Gujarat post-Godhra, it would be utterly irresponsible to talk of 'early Assembly polls'.

THE HINDU

0 1 JUN 2002

Tiffin box bombs rock Ahmedabad

TIMES NEWS NETWORK
AND AGENCIES

Ahmedabad: A series of blasts on Ahmedabad Municipal Transport Service buses, which left 15 persons injured, shattered the fragile peace in this city on Wednesday.

The first three blasts took place in as many buses between 10 a.m. and 10.10 a.m., when they were packed with office-goers. The fourth blast left three bomb disposal squad personnel seriously injured. They were trying to defuse a 'tiffin box bomb' found near Bopal.

The police said pipe bombs had been packed into tiffin boxes and triggered by battery-powered timing devices. The remains of the pipes and batteries have been recovered by the police and sent for examination. Police officials said two more buses with suspicious-looking objects kept in tiffin boxes were examined by the bomb disposal squad at Sarangpur in the heart of the city and at Ghuma village on the outskirts, near Bopal.

At least eight stick bombs with timer devices were recovered from tiffin boxes kept under seats in eight buses in the Kalupur terminus, the police said.

Termining the incidents "acts of terror", the state cabinet decided to set up a task force of senior officials to go into the root cause of the blasts. It will comprise officials from the home and police departments. Help from central agencies will be taken to expose those behind the blasts.

After a meeting of the state cabinet, chaired by chief minister Narendra Modi, spokespersons—agriculture minister Purshottam Rupala

and urban development minister I.K. Jadeja—said the blasts were "part of an anti-national conspiracy that had its origin in the inflammatory address of Gen Pervez Musharraf on Monday".

The state government was not linking the blasts to the recent communal disturbances because of "Pakistan's hand in them", Mr Jadeja said.

The first three blasts took place in the Geeta Mandir, Vasna and Gurukul areas, creating panic in the city and leaving buses without passengers. AMTS chairman Surendra Baxi said, "We have sounded an alert all over the city and surprise checks are being conducted on buses by the police."

In the Vasna case, a person approached the bus just as it was about to leave the stand and handed a tiffin box to a passenger, saying it was the driver's lunch box, police officials said. As the passenger handed in the box to passengers sitting in front of him, to be given to the driver, the bomb packed within went off. Three persons, including the driver, were injured.

The blast at Geeta Mandir ripped apart the rear portion of the bus, AMTS officials said. The Vasna and Gurukul blasts damaged the front portions of the vehicles.

Police sources said the motive was to create panic rather than large-scale destruction. "This could be the beginning of the retaliation against the killings during the riots. This could also be part of a design not to let peace return to Gujarat," said a senior police official. Police commissioner K.R. Kaushik has appealed to people not to panic and to inform the police about any suspicious-looking objects.



THE TERMINAL MAN: A bomb disposal squad member defuses one of the bombs hidden in a tiffin box at the Kalupur bus terminus in Ahmedabad on Wednesday.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

30 MAY 2002

Riot victims inflicted another unkind cut

By Sourav Mukherjee and Harit Mehta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: After standing in a queue for the better part of the day, Iqbalbhai Yusufbhai Vora was trembling with expectation as he extended his hand to get his cheque for the compensation the state government is giving riot-affected persons.

But he nearly collapsed when he saw the amount on the face—Rs 200. He had been expecting Rs 30,000 for his gutted house in Yaqubbbhai na Kua in the Vatwa area. "The state government has given me a compensation, but I continue to remain homeless and jobless," said Mr Vora, who has been staying at the Moti Durgah relief camp in Vatwa.

Many victims in the area have got only measly amounts of compensation, complained the camp's organiser, Akbar Ali. "If this is not corrected soon, we will be forced to agitate in front of the collector's office for compounding our miseries," he said.

But others like Iqbalmiya Rasulmiya have not got any compensation at all. The house in Dani Limda where Rasulmiya had been living as a tenant was gutted by rioters, but the state government has decided to

"The disparity between a person's loss and the compensation is stark..If matters are not set right, we will be forced to take to the streets"

help the house owner instead.

Rahemabibi Pathan also has been in a state of shock after receiving Rs 3,400 and Rs 4,500 for her two houses in Abadnagar. Like the others, she is unable to understand how the authorities calculated the payments.

Government records show that around 57,000 people stay in the city's 46 relief camps. The relief commissioner's office says that Rs 18.15 lakh has been paid to 419 people for their completely damaged houses—that is, an average of Rs 4,331 per house.

Even household compensation has not been paid to many victims, social workers allege. "Despite the government resolution of March 5, the household compensation of Rs 1,250 has not been paid to many people," says Somnath Vatsa of the Citizens' Initiative, which is helping in relief and rehabilitation.

Congress corporator Badruddin Sheikh, coordinator of the city's relief camps, said, "The disparity between a person's loss and the compensation is stark. Chandbhai Rasul Shaikh lost property and goods worth Rs 1.5 lakh in Dani Limda and got Rs 1,500 as compensation. If matters are not set right, we will be forced to take to the streets."

Gujarat toll 2,000: Tribunal

Statesman News Service

GANDHINAGAR, May 14. — Preliminary findings of the Concerned Citizens Tribunal indicate that the death toll in the ongoing violence in Gujarat is "not less than 2,000", which is double the official figure. Also, another 500 are feared missing. The number of women raped and killed has reached the 250 mark.

Talking about the "peculiarity" of the present riots in Gujarat, Mr Justice PN Sawant (retired judge of the Supreme Court), said here today, "The peculiarity is that it appeared to be an organised violence". He said: "Killings followed the same pattern and violence started simultaneously all across the state."

The Tribunal, whose chairman is Mr Justice Krishna Iyer (retired judge of the Supreme Court), examined some 1,500 victims in Ahmedabad, Vadodra, Bharuch, Godhra, Dahod apart from visiting relief camps in different cities and towns of the state. In an exclusive session for women victims in Vadodra, where almost 50 women were present, the Tribunal came to know that "police had also participated in assaulting the women".

5-6 1975
The evidence presented to the Tribunal also indicated that the preparations for targeting a particular minority community "had been going on since at least six to eight months".

According to Mr Justice Sawant, "Insiders from the Bajrang Dal, who had parted the company, furnished details, including the modus operandi."

Top police officers were not keen on meeting the members of the Tribunal. However, some government officials, including some policemen, furnished details to the Tribunal. Mr Justice Sawant said preliminary findings will be sent to the state as well as the Centre. The final report — a public document — is expected to be made available by 15 August.

The report will suggest steps to bridge the polarisation of the communities.

Interestingly, the Citizens' Tribunal has evidence to show "two or three ministers" actively participated in the riots.

One hurt in Ahmedabad: Barring a stabbing incident which left a person injured in Ahmedabad's Danilimda area and imposition of curfew in Vadtal are after a clash between two groups of *sadhus*, the city by and large remained peaceful today, adds PTI.

THE STATESMAN

1 MAY 2007

FRESH OPPORTUNITY TO REGISTER FIRs PROMISED

Modi soothes minority nerves

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Statesman News Service

GANDHINAGAR, May 13. — For the first time since the Gujarat violence broke out 10 weeks ago, the chief minister met members of the minority community today. Those present at the meeting said Mr Narendra Modi admitted that he had failed to maintain law and order. He also made a series of announcements addressing the grievances of the community.

One of the participants, Mr Afzal Khan of the Jamaat-i-Ulema-i-Hind, said Mr Modi "also apologised for not directly referring to the community" when he spoke of the victims of the communal flare-up. He reportedly said they were very much part of the state's five-crore population "which he constantly referred to".

About 40 members of the community met Mr Modi in the afternoon. They included select imams from across the state and NGO representatives. The meeting came about at the initiative of the National Commission for Minorities and Mr Modi's security adviser, Mr KPS Gill.

The commission vice-chairman, Mr Tarlochan Singh, said after the meeting that Mr Modi had announced that "everyone will get a fresh opportunity to lodge FIRs".

Mr Modi also announced that "no relief camp will be closed unless proper security" is provided for the inmates to return home. To address another grievance that excesses were being committed against women, he said committees with three women members each would be formed at the state level as well as in the districts to record afresh the atrocities against women.

He also announced that no one would be allowed to occupy religious places of another community. The cost of repairs of the places of worship will have

to be borne by NGOs because the government has no funds for it.

NCM member Mr Shamim Kasan and a representative of the minority community will be invited to supervise the implementation of the relief measures announced by the Prime Minister.

Several people have been missing since the violence began. Mr Modi said if sufficient proof was provided by the people he could waive the "six-year" clause to declare a person dead. Asked why he hadn't visited the relief camps, Mr Modi said he didn't want to aggravate the situation further.

Mr Tarlochan Singh said: "The Muslims feel a good beginning has been made." One of the participants said: "The chief minister is a responsible person. He didn't follow the *Rajdharm* earlier, let him now at least show that he can follow it."

Before Mr Modi's meeting, representatives of the minority community met Mr Gill and other officials in Ahmedabad.

Mr Gill expressed optimism that the image of Gujarat police can be improved. "When we went to Punjab, people used to

raise slogans against police, but within six months things improved and the slogan 'police zindabad' could be heard," Mr Gill said at the meeting with the NCM and minority community leaders.

Mr Ramji Lal Suman (Samajwadi Party) demanded in the Lok Sabha that the government issue a statement indicating to whom Mr Gill is accountable — Centre or state government.

Violence: The situation in Ahmedabad was under control today except for a stabbing at curfew-bound Kalapur late last night in which one person was injured, PTI adds. Indefinite curfew continued at Danilimda.

'Dawood hand': The VHP said Dawood Ibrahim's men had sneaked into relief camps in Gujarat and were fomenting trouble, SNS adds from Delhi.

Sorabjee: World concern can't be brushed aside

JAIPUR, May 13. — India can't brush aside concern voiced by some foreign countries over the Gujarat situation, Mr Soli Sorabjee today said. The old dogmas of state sovereignty are no longer in vogue and the international community can now express "legitimate concern". He urged the people to come forward and establish the rule of law in Gujarat. Speaking at a seminar on "Human Rights in Governance", the attorney-general said it wasn't enough for the government to criticise superficially or express resentment over the reports of foreign countries. "If the reports were incorrect... our response should be with facts." — PTI

STRAY INCIDENTS IN GUJARAT

Peace moves gain momentum

110-1
By Manas Dasgupta 13/5

AHMEDABAD, MAY 12. With the situation showing considerable improvement in the troubled city of Ahmedabad and the rest of riot-torn Gujarat, peace initiatives to bring the warring communities together are being intensified in the State.

At least one person was stabbed to death and another sustained stab injuries in the posh Maninagar locality, while a couple of houses and cabins were set afire in Jamalpur locality where the rival communities also fought a pitched battle.

The National Commission for Minorities, which had taken the initiative to bring leaders of both communities together to the negotiation table, is going ahead with its efforts despite a temporary setback. The Sangh Parivar has decided not to attend a meeting convened by the NCM here tomorrow which would be the first in the series of confabulations planned by the Commission between the leaders of the two communities.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad State secretary, Dillip Trivedi, claimed that it was yet to receive a formal communication from the NCM, nor had it yet been communicated its "status" when the Muslims were viewing it as the "main accused" in instigating the communal disturbances in the State.

Immediately after the NCM initiated the peace move when its delegation visited the State some 10 days ago, the VHP raised certain questions about the role played by a section of the Muslims in fanning communal sentiments in

the country. The Parivar leaders, by responding to the invitations issued by the NCM during its earlier visit and agreeing to constitute a representative committee for discussions with the Muslim leaders, have given enough indications that it was not averse to holding talks with the minorities.

The 16-member committee set up by the Muslim leaders to represent the minorities, however, would attend the meeting at which the security adviser to the Chief Minister, K.P.S. Gill, would be present. The delegation is also scheduled to meet the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, to represent their views.

The groundwork for the peace initiatives was being prepared by Mr. Gill and the new Ahmedabad Police Commissioner, K.R. Kaushik, who had undertaken the confidence-building exercise. While Mr. Gill, who is virtually deputising for the Chief Minister, held a meeting with some of the organisers of the minority relief camps for the riot victims, Mr. Kaushik visited the largest relief camp, Shah Alam Roza, personally inquiring about the FIRs filed by the victims.

While the Janata Dal (United) took out a peace march in Broach today, an all-religion prayer meeting for peace in the State was organised at the Shivanand Ashram here where the representatives of all religions were present.

The improvement in the situation has also encouraged the State revenue department to initiate steps to undertake a detailed survey of the damaged houses in the worst-hit Naroda-Patia locality where more than 90 people were burnt alive on February 28.

THE HINDU

Gujarat still burns

Security and confidence building needed

It is now more than 70 days since the orgy of violence began in Gujarat and there have only been a few days, which were incident free. Routinely newspaper headlines give a daily death toll, often in double digits, and yet the Gujarat government insists that the situation was brought back to normal within 72 hours. In the first round it was the minorities living in mixed localities who were targeted, killed or sent off to relief camps. Now it is the turn of the Muslim ghettos or the odd person who comes out to try and earn a living. People are still being burnt alive or stoned to death in broad daylight while culprits get away. Modi claims he has made 31,000 arrests; if that is so, where are new murderers coming from? Has Modi arrested the right people or has he just fudged figures? During the day combing operations take place, again in Muslim areas where the police claim to find glass bottles, cans and kitchen knives — all lethal weapons, which should not be found in a home! The victims continue to be victimised. Have the police confiscated a single trishul of the thousands that VHP leaders have proudly said they distributed, or arrested any of the goons that hang around Pravin Togadia's home? Do they dare?

A few of the relief camps were arbitrarily wound up and the inmates told to go home. Home to what? Insecurity? Some refugees made attempts to leave the camps and return to what is left of their homes but were met with threats. In the rural areas the price the victims are asked to pay is to abandon justice. Unwelcoming neighbours insist they take back the few FIRs that have been lodged. Many have found their land has been taken over in their absence. Perhaps this is the "goodwill" the RSS talked about in its Bangalore resolution. With the threat to their lives still strong, they have no option but to return to the overcrowded camps. But for how long?

THE STATESMAN

■ MUSLIM IPS OFFICER TO ASSIST GILL ■ NAIDU MEETS PM

Modi reshuffles police brass

SNS & PTI

GANDHINAGAR /NEW DELHI, May 10. — The Narendra Modi government, on the defensive over its handling of the post-Godhra situation, today effected a reshuffle of 14 top officers in the state police — beginning with Mr KR Kaushik, ADG, who was billed to replace Mr PC Pande as Ahmedabad police chief — while the city continued to burn with fresh violence killing six persons and injuring 50.

And in what could be the first possible overture to the minorities since the uninterrupted spate of killings, the state government appointed a senior Muslim police officer to assist Mr KPS Gill in his duties as special security adviser to the chief minister. Mr AI Syed, joint-director of the state police academy, has been appointed as officer on special duty to Mr Gill in addition to his current responsibilities.

Mr Satish Verma, DIG (Rajkot Range), was appointed Ahmedabad joint police commissioner, replacing Mr MK Tandon. The city's ACP, Mr Keshav Kumar, has been replaced by Mr Satish Sharma, DIG (Surat Range).

The changes were announced following a meeting between Mr Modi and Mr Gill late last night. This is the first police reshuffle since Mr Gill's appointment. With it, Mr Gill reportedly gets his chosen crop of officers from the state ranks positioned for strategic duties.

In New Delhi today, Mr Chandrababu Naidu reiterated to the Prime Minister his demand for the dismissal of Mr

Modi. In the Capital with a wish list of economic aid packages (Details on page 6) for Andhra Pradesh, Mr Naidu held an hour-long meeting with Mr Vajpayee today, their first since the TDP had chosen to abstain from the accrimonious voting on Rule 184 on Gujarat.

Advani sees Dawood hand

NEW DELHI, May 10. — Mr LK Advani today told the parliamentary consultative committee said leaders of the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and members and frontmen of gangs run by Dawood Ibrahim and Abdul Latif were involved in the conspiracies that plotted the retaliatory strikes in Gujarat and parts of Maharashtra post-Godhra.

He also said the Opposition-sponsored Rajya Sabha resolution on Gujarat has made the Centre "more conscious" of its obligations under Article 355. — PTI

Advani clears air on camps, page 6
CPM demands President's Rule, p 6

Later, Mr Naidu told reporters there was no change in the TDP's demand for Mr Modi's ouster, while reiterating his support for Mr Manohar Joshi as Speaker. The Prime Minister, however, said the mere removal of Mr Modi is not a solution to Gujarat's problems.

Violence continued unabated in the walled city throughout Friday. Three persons were killed and more than a

dozen injured when police fired several rounds and burst tear-gas shells to contain rampaging mobs in Jamalpur and Raikhad areas in the Haveli neighbourhood. Two persons were stabbed to death in Raikhad and Jamalpur while a mob burnt alive a motorcyclist in Kalupur. Riots in Kaugadapeeth claimed another life. Indefinite curfew has been imposed on Haveli, Kalupur, Danilimda and Kaugadapeeth.

Police said two CRPF companies, comprising 120 securitymen, arrived from Delhi to Gandhinagar today, while two more companies are awaited.

The situation in other riot-hit areas of Ahmedabad was tense but under control, with night curfew continuing in eight police station areas.

Fire Brigade personnel, who had threatened to go on strike following the attack on relatives of some firemen in Khadia yesterday, withdrew their agitation when the Ahmedabad civic commissioner, Mr P Paneervel, assured them of police protection on rescue missions.

The new Ahmedabad police commissioner, Mr KR Kaushik, visited riot-hit areas of the city later in the day.

In another development, the BJP today questioned the motive of Punjab chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh behind yesterday's rejection of the Gujarat government's request for commandos for the state, adds SNS from New Delhi. Charging Punjab with trying to politicise the issue, BJP spokesperson Mr VK Malhotra recalled that Capt. Singh had first agreed to Mr Gill's request and then rejected it on an afterthought, which was in "bad taste".

THE STATESMAN

• • MAY 10 2002

'GILL DID CONTACT THE STATE HOME SECRETARY'

Punjab not to spare police forces for Gujarat

By Sarabjit Pandher

CHANDIGARH, MAY 9. The Punjab Government today expressed its inability to spare its police personnel for deployment in violence-torn Gujarat, citing "non-availability" of reserve forces. While not many officers were willing to comment on the decision, it is said to have been taken after a "review of ground realities," especially in the wake of some recent incidents of law and order in the State.

According to an official statement from Delhi, the Punjab Government admitted that the Security Adviser to the Gujarat Chief Minister, K.P.S. Gill, had contacted the Punjab Home Secretary, S. K. Sinha, and requested him to spare some companies of the Punjab police for deployment in Gujarat. (The Punjab Chief Minister, Amarinder Singh, and at least half a dozen Ministers and senior officers are currently camping in the capital to attend meetings on investment and the State's fiscal situation).

The Punjab Government, however, felt its police forces were permanently committed within the State, especially on its borders with Jammu and

Kashmir. After reviewing their position and the State's requirements, the Home Department said it could not accede to Mr. Gill's request. "Therefore, Capt. Singh regretfully decided that no police force could be spared," the statement said.

Earlier reports had indicated that the Punjab Government had accepted Mr. Gill's "personal" request for a full battalion of Punjab police commandos. When the State Government said it could spare only one battalion of "ordinary" personnel, Mr. Gill was reluctant to accept the offer, sources

said. Top-ranking officers of the State police were opposed to the deployment of Punjab commando units in Gujarat, as they feared an escalation in the militant activities of Kashmiri terrorists, who a few months ago, struck near the border of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu, the sources added. The decision of the Punjab Government has given rise to speculation. Though insiders concede that it could have been prompted by political considerations, a section of the bureaucracy has said that Mr. Gill over-stepped his brief by making the request,

which should have been routed through the Union Home Ministry. It has also pointed to reports of discontent among the ranks of the Gujarat police over Mr. Gill's request.

There are others who feel the Government gave in to pressure from various quarters, which opposed the deployment of the Punjab police personnel in Gujarat.

Gujarat issue rocks LS

Javed M. Ansari reports from New Delhi:

The Gujarat issue once again rocked the Lok Sabha with agitated Opposition members accusing the State Government of ordering the closure of relief camps in the State. The Treasury benches countered the charge and the House was adjourned for two hours.

The issue was raised during zero hour by Madhusudhan Mistry of the Congress who kept waving a copy of the written order asking for the closure of relief camps in Dharod district.

Mr. Mistry came down heavily on the Union Home Minister, L. K. Advani, for claiming in the House that the relief camps would continue to function. Trying hard to make himself heard over the noise created by the BJP members, Mr. Mistry said he had a copy of the written order served by the District Magistrate, Dharod.

Mr. Mistry alleged that the Gujarat Government was not only refusing to help the inmates of the relief camps but was also making things difficult for the camps to continue. "The Government is forcing people to leave the camps, the Chief Minister has no right to continue and must resign."

He was joined by his party MPs and colleagues from the Left parties, the RJD and the SP, which alleged that the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, was putting thousands of camp inmates to enormous hardship in this scorching heat. The members later entered the well of the House and raised the slogan "Modi hatao, desh bachao" (Remove Modi, save the country).

In turn the BJP MPs accused the Opposition of politicising the Gujarat issue. With both sides unwilling to relent, the Deputy Speaker, P.M. Sayeed, adjourned the House.

More CRPF forces moved

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 9. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) today moved four additional companies to Gujarat to meet the increasing demand for Central paramilitary forces in the State. The movement takes the number of CRPF and Rapid Action Force (RAF) companies deployed in Gujarat to 17, a CRPF spokesperson said here today.

The CRPF had moved two companies from Gurgaon to Gujarat on Wednesday. While seven companies (five CRPF and two RAF) are already deployed in Ahmedabad for providing security in riot-hit areas, one RAF company each is deployed in Godhra, Vadodra and Surat districts. One CRPF company has been stationed in Gurgaon.

SEE HINDO

10 MAY 2002

They lived to tell the world

We met Rehmunissa, a frail young woman who had a two-day infant lying on the ground in front of her. Rehmunissa told us, "My labour pains started and I delivered my baby while the attacks were taking place on February 28. I was all alone. Most of the people had run away including the midwife. They had been told that some vehicles had been sent to take them away to safety. The midwife returned when this did not happen and she cut the umbilical cord. Immediately after this, I ran to the entrance of my *chowki* and back seven times in that condition, in the same clothes, clutching my newborn infant because someone would say that the vehicles had come. Finally, the vehicle came and I was brought to the camp."

Naseem Bano ran for her life with her infant male child that had been born on February 24 while Roshan who was nine months pregnant did the same. Rukhsana, whose child was born on March 5 after she had come to the camp and had been taken for her delivery to the hospital, was also with them. All three of them, along with others from the area, ran to the excise *chowki* across the road, fell at the feet of the constables there and begged them to save their lives. They told us that, after some time, the constables, moved by their plight...called the police who brought them to the camp.

A seven-year-old boy, Yusuf, was rescued from a garbage heap where he had been left for dead and brought to the camp. A sword had slashed him just above the right eye, which was still bloodshot. His mother, Razia Bano, had been admitted to the hospital with severe burns. His father, Mohammad Ayub Ghani, had been killed but Yusuf had been told that he was in the hospital looking after his mother.

Babloo (real name, Irshad), the 21-year-old son of Mehrunissa and Noor Mohammed, who lives in the Telephone Exchange *galli chali* and does plastering work, was injured in police firing on the 28th at 4 pm and was reportedly in the Government Hospital, where he was taken from the Al Amin Hospital.

Extracts from the report of a visit to Gujarat by the CPI(M) central committee and the All India Democratic Women's Association, March 2002

Sahaspur Bathiya: Najma Ayub Quraishi, about 30 years old, arrived in the Shah Alam camp completely naked. She told us that "acid was thrown on me and one of the rioters urinated in my mouth. Because my clothes were sticking to my skin and the burning sensation was unbearable, I tore them off



Mute witness

and pieces of my skin also came off. Both my children were killed."

Haldvara village...is 40 kilometres away from the Bapunagar Aman Chowk camp where 450 of its inhabitants have come. They were brought there by the army after their homes had been attacked. Roshan Bano from this village told us that the men and women of the village lay in the fields with their children for 2 to 3 days without any food. She said that even their animals were burnt alive by the attackers. With her were Haneefa, a physically challenged child,

and Ismael Bhai Nanabhai, a blind, old man.

Juhapura: We met Roshanbai Shaikh who lives and runs a women's patchwork co-operative in this area...Here we met Farzana, Shahnaz Bano, Manjulaben Patel, and Farhat. Roshanbai talked to us with great dignity and without any bitterness but with great anguish. She said that the 28th was tense with people moving around, shouting slogans and threatening them.

Most of the population in this area is Muslim but there is one row of Hindu hutments in the Jhalah Complex. All the 150 Hindu families left the area and their homes are safe and untouched. They are reported to be in Vejalpur Vistar. We could not visit them but we did see their homes.

On March 1, when the men had gone to the mosque for the Friday prayers and the women and children were in their homes, rioters entered the area and started the attacks. They threw acid and indulged in arson. Ninety homes were burnt. Their inhabitants are mostly in the Al Rahmani camp which we could not visit. The local Hindu inhabitants only joined the outsiders after the police came and taunted them and provoked them. Thinner chemical was used freely in the arson.

Farzana told us that her husband, Haneef, was heartbroken not by the burning of his house and furniture but by the burning of his books which he had collected and spent more than Rs 80,000 on. She is most concerned about the education of her two children and asked us whether we thought that their Hindu teachers would neglect them or deliberately punish them when they eventually went back to their school.

Manjulaben told us that she lives and works in that area among Muslims and does not feel threatened at all. She said, "The government is doing all this. The Bajrang Dal, VHP, Shiv Sena and all these people should be banned."

Farhat, a 12-year-old boy, asked us how and when he would be able to go back to the Don Bosco school where he studies.

TO BE CONCLUDED

THE TELEGRAPH

6 9 MAY 2002

Rift in Modi Cabinet over violence

By Manas Dasgupta

GANDHINAGAR, MAY 8. The continued violence in Ahmedabad and some other parts of riot-torn Gujarat seems to have created a rift in the Narendra Modi Cabinet with several Ministers speaking up against the handling of the situation.

Though the agenda before the Cabinet meeting today was to discuss Gujarat's "claim" to the waters of Sindhu river in Pakistan, the law and order situation figured prominently with some of the Ministers questioning the role the former Punjab police chief, K.P.S. Gill, is expected to play in the State.

Mr. Modi was reportedly put on the defensive, with the attack coming from an unexpected corner, the Industries Minister, Suresh Mehta, a moderate in the Cabinet. Pointing out the veil of secrecy over Mr. Gill's appointment as the Security Adviser to the Chief Minister, Mr. Mehta wanted to know whether he was "imposed by the Centre" and how he would handle the situation.

He also wondered if Mr. Gill was appointed by the State Government, why was he talking directly to the Centre, more precisely the Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani, and decide about "requisitioning" 1,000 trained police commandos from Punjab.

Mr. Modi's reply that Mr. Gill was sent to

the State at his own request, failed to satisfy the Ministers, who pointed out the reluctance shown by the State Government at the initial stages to accept Mr. Gill. They also wanted to know the facilities the State Government planned to extend to Mr. Gill to bring the situation under control.

Some of the Ministers also felt that Mr. Gill's appointment indicated "failure" of the State's law and order machinery and would further demoralise it. They believed that the latest bout of disturbances in some parts of Ahmedabad from Sunday could be the result of the overall demoralisation of the police force. Particularly, the Ministers from Ahmedabad, the worst-hit by the riots, took exception to the continuation of violence. Though the Ministers such as Ashok Bhatt, Bharat Barot, Kaushik Patel and Haren Pandya were considered to be close to Mr. Modi, they expressed disappointment over the continued violence. They are believed to have told Mr. Modi that the continued violence was not only bringing a bad name to Gujarat nationally and internationally, it was also causing a loss of image for the ruling BJP.

Some of the Ministers felt that contrary to the initial estimates of the BJP returning to power with a resounding majority in the coming elections, the continued violence could actually harm the party's interests. They also pointed out that the entire trading community, suffering heavy losses in

the disturbances for the last two and a half months, had become alienated from the BJP and large sections of the common masses were also dissatisfied with the Government's performance.

It was perhaps for the first time since the riots broke out in the aftermath of the Godhra carnage on February 27 that the law and order situation became a topic of discussion in the Cabinet meeting because of Mr. Modi's reluctance. The Chief Minister always maintained that only a small part of the State was hit by the riots which could be handled by the law and order machinery and that the State Government needed to move on with "developmental" activities.

The sudden spurt in violence since Sunday in which at least 35 persons have lost their lives in Ahmedabad alone, has also put a question mark on Mr. Gill's mission to contain violence. Police sources feel that the Sangh Parivar, displeased over his appointment, has sparked the current round of violence.

Mr. Gill, who returned from Delhi on Tuesday night, held a high-level meeting with the top police officers on the prevailing situation in the State, particularly Ahmedabad. He declined to talk to the media but it is learnt that he briefed the top police officers about the role he would assign to his select Punjab commandos in containing violence. The commandos are expected to reach here in batches in a day or two.

THE HINDU

9 MAY 2002

Super cop awaits elite commandos

Statesman News Service

Srb

NEW DELHI, May 8. — As soon as the crack commandos of the Punjab police get to Ahmedabad, probably within the next 48 hours, Mr KPS Gill, security adviser to the Gujarat chief minister, will get his campaign to control violent incidents underway.

According to sources, the super cop, whose choice is significant in that it is intended to provide the minority community a sense of protection, would launch his programme with a late night visit to several of the badly riot-scarred areas of Ahmedabad.

Accompanied by some of the commandos he has sought, the high-profile visits would be designed to instill confidence within minority community members, many of whom have lost faith in the local administration.

Getting in commandos from the Punjab police, many of whom he personally recruited (so they

would be unfailingly committed to him), was almost a precondition of his accepting the job.

The Gujarat administration requested for these forces and the new Punjab administration, under chief minister Captain Amrinder Singh, readily agreed.

The choice of commandos to essentially deal with a riot situation, though unusual, is not unique, sources said. They would not be hampered by the political pressures the local police force has to operate under.

With his track record of not having much patience with human rights violations in the way of getting things done, Mr Gill was chosen over the more cautious other 'super cop', Mr Julio Rebeiro, in order to fulfil a clearly defined mandate. End the violence that has now stretched over two months.

Mr Gill held a two-hour meeting with Gujarat DGP Mr K Chakravarti, Ahmedabad police commissioner Mr PC Pande and other senior police officers, SNS adds from Gandhinagar.

THE STATESMAN

9 MAY 2002

Violence unabated in Gujarat, 9 killed

PTI & Associated Press Service

AHMEDABAD, May 8. — Violence continued in parts of Gujarat today claiming nine more lives. The death toll since Sunday has mounted to 28.

Five people were killed and 13 injured when police fired to disperse mobs in Maninagar in the city after a bomb blast spread panic in the area which was under curfew. Nineteen people were injured in violence in the Kalupur area.

A Muslim youth of Vatva locality was stabbed to death tonight when he was passing through a majority-dominated area.

A person was stabbed to death in Bhiloda town of Sabarkantha district last night while two bodies with stab wounds were recovered by the police from Gyaspur village in Ahmedabad rural district.

Police fired and burst teargas shells at Idgah Chowki and Delhi Darwaja areas in the city to disperse mobs indulging in stone-pelting.

Five policemen were injured and a BSF jawan was wounded after being attacked at a building in Maninagar.

Thirty-three people were arrested. One pistol, some cartridges, 33 crude

bombs and a sword were seized from them.

Reports of stone-throwing and group clashes poured in from Karinj and Godilinda. Vejapur and Kalupur are under indefinite curfew.

Mr SMS Bhukari, relief coordinator, said there was no attempt to set a deadline for the closure of the relief camps. He said relief material worth Rs 39.71 crore had been distributed among the riot-hit.

Governor Mr Sunder Singh Bhandari visited Godhra and inspected the Coach S-6 of the Sabarmati Express. Later, he went to refugee camps at Chhota Udaipur.

The RSS today said it suspected the involvement of foreign elements, including the ISI, in the Godhra carnage and the subsequent violence, a Nagpur report says.

Pak denial: Pakistan denied Mr LK Advani's charge that elements in the country are fanning the flames of communal unrest in Gujarat and called for banning of the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal and Shiv Sena.

A foreign office statement said the "patently false claim" was yet another proof of the BJP leadership's predisposition to blame Pakistan for their own policies.

Gill awaits his commandos

NEW DELHI, May 8. — As soon as the Punjab police commandos arrive at Ahmedabad, probably within the next 48 hours, Mr KPS Gill will get his campaign to contain the Gujarat violence underway.

Sources said the former Punjab police chief, whose choice is significant in that it is intended to provide the minority community a sense of protection, would launch his programme with a late night visit to several of the worst-hit areas of Ahmedabad. — SNS

Details on page 6

Hands off Gujarat, Jaswant tells the world

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 7 MAY

FOREIGN MINISTER Jaswant Singh once again made it clear on Tuesday that India will not put up with any suggestions offered by any foreign country on its "internal matters." Reply-
Singh ruled out inviting international observers for the coming elections in Jammu & Kashmir. Mr Singh was clarifying India's stand on the European Union's "selective leaks" on Gujarat.

"India will not accept prescriptions to do this or that. We did not accept them in 1998 (after the nuclear tests). India will not accept being spoken to from assumed positions of superiority or greater morality."

Mr Singh's remarks came even as a US statutory body indicted

India for "primarily" targeting Muslims in the communal violence in Gujarat. However, despite rampant killings of Shias in Pakistan, General Musharraf got a pat on the back for his measures to stop extremism and shut down religious groups from "promoting violence."

It has been pointed out that among the members of the United States commission on international religious freedom is Shirin-Tahir-Kheli, a Pakistani American who was one of the contenders for a state department job on South Asia.

India, despite the strictures, however did not merit more than a few paragraphs in the report, which concentrated on Sudan, China, Indonesia, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

The report, official sources said, was presented to US president George W. Bush, secretary of



JASWANT: STAY AWAY FROM US
state Colin Powell and the Congress leadership.

But while the body receives funding from the government, its members are not part of the United States administration or gov-

ernment and neither does the recommendations have any policy implications. The report this year recommends sanctions against Saudi Arabia and Turkmenistan, while dubbing Sudan the "worst offender."

The report added: "The commission continues to urge the US government to press Indian authorities to halt the atrocities and violence, bring perpetrators to justice, and do more to root out the causes of religious intolerance."

On the other hand, the report said: "In recent months, the Pakistani government has also undertaken efforts to prevent militant religious extremist groups and religious schools from promoting violence or possessing any type of weapons in line with the commission's recommendations."

The report is unlikely to set the Potomac on fire, because as past

experience shows, it has rarely any effect on US policy.

Meanwhile, Mr Singh also dismissed an Opposition accusation that India was letting its Afghanistan policy slip out of control. Reiterating the Indian position that there could be no outside influences or forces in that country, Mr Singh added: "Afghanistan has to find solutions to its problems. Foreign countries cannot solve them."

Regarding Indo-Pak relations, Mr Singh made it clear that Islamabad had to take the next step by stopping cross-border terrorism in that country "Pakistan had to decide for itself the kind of long-term relationship it wanted with India. This is a fundamental question," Mr Singh said, stressing the inviolability of the LoC and asking Pakistan to reaffirm the same.

The mobs knew no mercy

Yashodaben Koshti, whom we met at the Shah Alam camp, told us that she had read leaflets distributed by the VHP that said that Hindus should not have any kind of relations with Muslims. If they did, they were not Hindus at all. She said, "I am a Hindu but I am ashamed at what they have done in my name and that is why I am here in the camp to help in whatever way I can."

In the camps, areas and hospitals that we visited, there were groups of people from the same neighbourhood, mohalla or village. From their accounts, it was possible to piece together pictures of what transpired in these areas between the night of February 27 and March 5.

...*The Times of India* of March 13 says that, according to the police, 107 people were burnt to death in Naroda Patia and the adjacent area. The Shah Alam Relief Committee presented a memorandum to the all-party delegation that visited their camp on March 8.

In this they have said, "Another gruesome tragedy took place at Naroda Patia and Naroda village in the northern labour/industrial area of Ahmedabad. A Hindu gentleman called Tiwari, who is a resident of Naroda Patia, sheltered 30 people in his house. He contacted the Shah Alam committee. The DCP of the area was contacted for help to shift these stranded people. It took three hours for the police to arrive and by that time 27 Muslim women,

Extracts from the report of a visit to Gujarat by the CPI(M) central committee and the All India Democratic Women's Association, March 2002

men and children were done to death. Only three escaped...and are now in Shah Alam refugee camp."

The delegation met the victims from this area of



No respite

Ahmedabad in both the Shah Alam and Juhapura Sankalit Nagar camps. Amina, an educated woman who worked in a printing press and lived near the Noorani Masjid in this area, said that tension

started growing in the area from the 27th night. On the 28th morning (the day on which the VHP had declared a Gujarat *bandh*), between 9 and 10 am, her neighbours started shouting, "They are coming." The entire area was cordoned off by mobs on all sides. She said that on the pretext of saving them, the rioters separated the women and children from the men, but after this happened the women were also attacked brutally.

Her sister, Saeeda, a dress-maker, was killed in the melee that ensued. A pregnant woman, Qausar, was slashed through her stomach with a sword and killed. The nearby Roadways Depot was used to supply fuel which was used for burning homes and people.

Rashida Bano, whose husband had a tube-light supply business and who is Qausar's sister-in-law, said that her home, in which there was a large consignment of tube-lights, was completely burnt down. Sabira Bibi and Chand Bibi confirmed the story about Qausar. In fact, the latter said that she was an eyewitness. Fatima said that her sister, Qudrat Bibi, lost 11 members of her extended family, of which only three members have survived. Lal Bibi's son Muskan and daughter Safiya were both killed. She said that when she cried out to SRP personnel for help, they said, "You people burnt Hindus in the train, now you have to pay the price."

TO BE CONCLUDED

Two stoned to death; 15 hurt in Godhra bus blast

From Trust of India

AHMEDABAD, May 6. — Two youths from the minority community were stoned to death by a group at Dhor Bazar in Ahmedabad today, taking the toll in the fresh violence that erupted yesterday to 10.

The youths, on a cycle, were stopped by a mob that thrashed them before hitting them with stones. The two died instantly.

Police lobbed tear-gas shells to scare away a crowd which gathered near a place of worship at Mirzapur that was rocked by two explosions.

Curfew, imposed yesterday, continued at Danilimda and Shahpur areas in the city.

Fifteen passengers, including three women and a child, were injured when a bomb exploded in a state transport bus at Lunavada bus stand in Panchmahal district today, a report from Godhra adds. About 25 passengers were in the Malvan-bound bus at that time.

Five of the injured have been admitted to a Godhra hospital.

The fresh flare-up came soon after Mr KPS Gill's "appointment" as the chief minister's security adviser, SNS adds from Gandhinagar and New Delhi.

Sources said the suggestion to bring in Mr Gill was placed before Mr Narendra Modi by Union law minister Mr Arun Jaitley when he had visited the state between 12 and 14 April. Mr Jaitley's suggestion was supposed to be "part of the damage-control strategy".

No one in the Centre, however, seems ready to take the responsibility or credit for Mr Gill's "appointment". His staff, in fact, said he was yet to get the appointment letter. Mr Gill, who returned to Delhi today from Gujarat, was not available for comments. He's likely to meet Mr LK Advani tomorrow.

A source said Mr Gill "was little unclear on what he's supposed to do". His meetings in Gujarat



Police examine the body of a man who was stoned to death by a mob in Ahmedabad on Monday. — AFP

Omar's resignation rejected

NEW DELHI, May 6. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee has rejected Mr Omar Abdullah's offer to resign as minister of state for external affairs over Gujarat. Mr Abdullah said today that Mr Vajpayee yesterday "asked (him) to continue with (his) work". Mr Abdullah said he might remain in the Vajpayee Cabinet even after taking over as party chief. — SNS

yesterday "had yielded information that police weren't allowed to do the job effectively".

Mr Gill's appointment comes not "72 hours", but 72 days after the after the Godhra carnage. This proves that Mr Modi's initial boast that he had been able to achieve "normalcy within 72 hours" was hollow. He had even said he was "ready to be hanged from the Bhadra Fort if he had committed any crime".

Rioters identified: Mr Modi today said those who triggered communal violence in Ahmedabad and Baroda had been identified and would be dealt with sternly, a report from Surat adds. **BJP rally:** Thousands of workers of the BJP's youth wing today reposed faith in Mr Modi's leadership and resolved to "tear apart the pseudo-secular mask" of the Opposition parties, a report from Delhi adds.

Life in a rich refugee camp

Sanitation and the supply of water are also problems. For 9,000 people in the Shah Alam camp, the municipal corporation has provided a mobile toilet with just 5 seats and a temporary toilet with 5 seats. There is no drainage or any arrangement for cleaning or garbage removal. In contrast, local volunteers are working around the clock to keep the camps inhabitable. The delegation came across an NGO, the Kamdar Swasthya Suraksha Mandal, which was cleaning the Babu Nagar camp and had cleaned 8 other camps. Two water tankers are provided to the Shah Alam camp everyday, but the organizers of the camp are responsible for the emptying of the tankers, and if they are late, the tankers leave.

One or two camps require government compensation forms to be filled in against which the victims are supposed to get yellow cards. Volunteers spend hours trying to fill up the forms for the victims. This is a difficult task since the forms are very complex and detailed and demand a lot of information, not all of it available to people who have lost their homes and all their documents. The shortage of forms can be comprehended by the fact that while there are more than 8,000 people in the Babu Nagar camp, they have been given only 200 forms. There is no provision being made for the filing of FIRs... Since most of the *thanas* are far away from the camps, it is not possible for the victims to go there. Only in Babu Nagar camp were the former residents of Akbar Nagar (which has been razed to the ground) able to go to the thana across the road... to file their FIRs. About 20 FIRs a day are actually registered by the thana authorities when there are more than 300 to be filed.

No government officials had visited any of these camps except those who accompanied the all-party delegation that visited the Shah

Extracts from the report of a visit to Gujarat by the CPI(M) central committee and the All India Democratic Women's Association, March 2002

Alam camp. The Kankariya camp had 175 Dalit families from the Shah Alam Toll Naka area. Gopal Bhai Sharma, who was in charge of the Kankaria municipal schools ...told us that 700 people from this area came to this camp on February 28 after they were attacked... He said that stones and acid were thrown



Note their troubles

on these people by Muslims living in an 11-storey building nearby. Bhagaji was killed. Forty houses were burnt. They have been back since to see their houses which are undamaged. They are all daily wage-earners and Dalits. The women work as domestic servants in their neighbourhood. They are all anxious to return home and start working again but are demanding that a police

chowki be established in the area.

We were happy when they informed us that they had been getting rations from March 4 and that all their FIRs had already been lodged with the police. Without this help these poor families would have been in even further distress. Unlike the other camps, we did not find any volunteers or help here. The camp is in an upper caste neighbourhood. Narendra Modi, Fakirbhai Vaghela and the opposition leader, Amarsingh Chowdhury, have all visited the camp. Various officials have also been regularly visiting the camp. We could only wish that the other camps had received similar attention.

But on the contrary, till March 10, not a single minister or a single government official had visited even a single camp, apart from at the time of the visit of the all party delegation. Since we were late for our appointment with the collector, K. Srinivas, we met the additional collector, Urmila Patel, along with officials in charge of the relief operations. When we pointed out this blatant double standard in aid to relief camps the only reply was that employees are too scared to go to the Muslim camps. What about officials? Actually, many non-Muslim relief workers were moving in and out of the camps with no problem. It appeared to be a deliberate canard against the Muslim community that relief workers would be attacked, propaganda to justify the clearly discriminatory approach between Muslim and Hindu camps. Shockingly, the officials expressed ignorance about the fact that no rations were being sent or that FIRs were not being filed. They said that the police commissioner was to have ensured a desk at each camp to file the FIRs and were surprised that it was not so.

TO BE CONCLUDED

Nation gets a 'blot', Modi another life

RS passes censure motion; Atal open to Article 355 in Gujarat

HT Correspondents
New Delhi/Ahmedabad, May 6

IN THE Prime Minister's words, this would be another "blot" on the nation. Two youths in Ahmedabad left for work early this morning on their cycles. A mob stopped them, picked up concrete slabs lying on the pavement, and battered their heads in.

Even as violence continued to rage in Gujarat, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said in the Rajya Sabha that "in retrospect" it had been the "right decision" not to remove Chief Minister Narendra Modi.

True, he said, at one point of time Modi's removal had been considered, but "this is not a solution".

Yesterday, Vajpayee had declared that Modi had done a "reasonably good job". But today, he said that what had happened in Gujarat was "deplorable", and a "blot" on the nation.

The blots, though, were multiplying. Besides the two youths who were clobbered to death, a crude bomb went off in a State road transport corporation bus at Panchmahal district near Godhra. Ten people were injured. Yesterday, five persons were killed in rioting in the State and 30 injured, providing the Opposition fresh ammunition to take on Vajpayee.

The Opposition had moved a motion in the Rajya Sabha which specifically sought the Government's intervention in Gujarat under Article 355.

The Article is a tool the Centre can use to protect citizens in States where there is an external emergency or serious internal disturbance.

The motion was passed unanimously today with Vajpayee assuring members that if need be he will not hesitate to invoke Article 355 in Gujarat.

He urged the Opposition to cooperate, saying confrontation would not solve problems just as Ahmedabad was not the answer to Godhra. "The law should be allowed to take care of the law-breakers," he said. Gujarat, he felt, had the capacity to "stand up" again. The violence of the past few weeks should be forgotten as a "bad dream".

But the Opposition with Arjun Singh of the Congress moving the motion was in no mood to let the Government forget the past, especially Goa.

Vajpayee ducked Arjun Singh's blows, arguing that religious fundamentalism was on the rise in many countries. India, too, was not free from it. He said when he had spoken of militancy in Islam (at Goa), he had also talked about Hindu militancy. Unfortunately, it was not highlighted by the media.

Vajpayee said the Opposition must have patience and wait for the Lok Sabha polls to grab power. There were no immediate plans for elections in Gujarat.

Arjun Singh, in his reply to the debate, said the Prime Minister's speech was full of words and had little sentiment. He said if Vajpayee wanted suggestions for action, he could simply listen to his heart and act.

Home Minister LK Advani quoted the Sarkaria Commission report to assert that there was no connection between Article 355 and Article 356.

Related reports on Page 10

Violence erupts in Ahmedabad again, 7 killed

Gill rushes to Delhi to brief Centre

Times News Network

AHMEDABAD/VADODARA: After a six-day lull, violence returned to Ahmedabad on Sunday with rioters going on the rampage in the Shahpur, Madhavpura and Dani Limda areas, forcing the police to open fire.

Seven persons were killed by Sunday evening, although the police control room maintained that the toll was three. Vadodara's calm was also shattered by stray incidents of violence, including one in which a state reserve police jawan was attacked. In

Ahmedabad, two persons were burnt alive in the Bhulabhai Park area under Kagdapih police station and at the Shah-e-Alam toll naka under the Dani Limda police station.

A three-year-old boy was killed when a heavy object fell on his head after an explosion in the Parikshitlal Nagar area of Behrampura. Another person succumbed to stab wounds in the same area, while a third is said to have died of shell injuries. Unconfirmed reports said two persons were burnt alive. Indefinite curfew was reimposed in the Shahpur and Dani Limda areas immediately thereafter.

The violence took place a day after chief minister Narendra Modi appointed K.P.S. Gill as his security adviser. Mr Gill is learnt to have spent the entire day at the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) guest house in Chiloda after some meetings in Gandhinagar. He was at the guest house till 6 p.m. before he rushed to the circuit house annexe to meet Mr Modi.

No police officer was present at

this meeting, which was attended by state health minister Ashok Bhatt and principal secretary to the chief minister Anil Mukim.

Mr Gill left in the evening for Delhi to apprise the Centre of the situation. Some 40 people were injured in the rioting and police firing on mobs. Nine of them sustained bullet injuries, while the rest sustained splinter injuries from crude bombs. The condition of some of the injured, most of whom have been admitted to L.G. Hospital, is said to be critical.

The rioters first torched the scrap market at Parikshitlal Nagar in Behrampura and then turned their attention on the shops and houses in the vicinity. They made a bonfire of the furniture before they left.

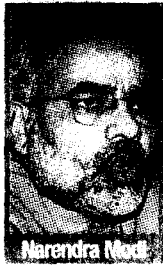
According to eye witnesses, the trouble began all of a sudden and the area around Parikshitlal Nagar resounded with the sound of crude bombs, tear gas shells and bullets as tension gripped the city.

In another incident, an armed mob attacked a 35-year-old man in Mirzapur, which led to violence in the Shahpur area in the afternoon. Curfew was imposed in Shahpur after mobs came out on the streets in the Dilli Chakla area and indulged in stone throwing, additional commissioner of police Keshav Kumar said.

Earlier in the afternoon, trouble broke out in the Dhobhi Ghat area of Madhavpura where one person was stabbed after which mobs came out on the streets and resorted to stone-throwing. Police opened fire to disperse them but there were no reports of any injuries.

BJP leaders come to Modi's rescue

NEW DELHI: Coming to the defence of Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi, top leaders of the BJP, including senior cabinet ministers, would be addressing a youth rally in the capital on



Monday to "expose" the allegations levelled by Congress and other political parties that the state Government had "targeted" Muslims in Gujarat. Over 10,000 activists of the party's youth wing, the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), would be participating in the rally called 'Chhadam Dharma Nirpekshita Virdodhi Pradarshan' (anti-pseudo secularism rally), its spokesman Sidharth Nath Singh said. (PTI)

4 killed, curfew in Ahmedabad

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, MAY 5. At least four persons were killed and 20 others injured as violence once again broke out in Ahmedabad and Vadodara today, shattering the fragile peace in riot-torn Gujarat.

An indefinite curfew has been redeclared in Shahpur, Dani Limda and Behrampura police station areas in Ahmedabad after incidents of stone-throwing, arson and stabbing forcing the police to open fire. A couple of incidents of stabbing were also reported from Vadodara where a police jawan was among the victims, but there was no loss of life.

Even as the former Punjab police chief, K.P.S. Gill, took over as security adviser to the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, yesterday, violent mobs took to the streets again today topping barely four incident-free days.

Police said the trouble began in the Behrampura-Shah Alam locality where a violent mob set fire to a scrap market and the fire engulfed a few adjoining houses. The rival groups came out on the streets indulging in heavy stone-throwing. The local people said a number of bombs were also exploded though police did not confirm it.

Police also refused to confirm whether a person was burnt in the same locality but eyewitness accounts said that a two-wheeler rider was stabbed and when he fell from the scooter, he was set afire.

The disturbances soon spread to the adjoining Dani Limda area where about a two dozen houses and shops were



A car set on fire by a mob near the Shahalam area, in Ahmedabad, on Sunday morning. —Photo: Paras Shah

set afire by hooligans. A boy was reportedly crushed in a melee caused by police chasing arsonists.

While one person was stabbed to death in Shahpur following which police imposed an indefinite curfew, one each was killed in police firing in Behrampura and Dani Limda localities. Police could not immediately say the number of rounds fired but confirmed that it would be more than 100. A number of teargas shells were also burst to disperse the stone-throwing mobs. At least 20 persons have also been injured in police firing, stone-throwing and bomb explosions.

Reports of disturbances were also received from Dudheswar and Madhavpura areas where violent mobs indulged in stone-

throwing and arson but police claimed that the mobs were dispersed by tear-gassing.

Tension spread in Vadodara after one person was stabbed in Panigate locality while a police jawan was attacked in Navapura. Following the stabbing incidents, irate mobs also indulged in arson and stone-throwing but dispersed after police lobbed teargas shells.

The Chief Minister has convened a high-level meeting of the senior Home Department officials and top police officers to take stock of the renewed violence. The outbreak of violence when it seemed that the State was progressing fast towards normality has baffled the authorities. Mr. Gill was also believed to be present in the meeting.

THE HINDU

Modi gives grudging salute to supercop

FROM BASANT RAWAT

Ahmedabad, May 4: Chief minister Narendra Modi today swallowed his pride and accepted K.P.S. Gill as security adviser to the Gujarat government, a day after the supercop landed in the city for his new assignment.

As a face-saving gesture, the state government issued a terse statement, saying Gill was appointed "in view of the National Human Rights Commission's recommendations".

One of the suggestions of the rights panel was to make the police force more professional. The government now says Gill's "vast experience in curbing militancy" will help restore normalcy in the riot-savaged state.

Yesterday, top government officials were not even ready to acknowledge that there was any move by the Centre to send the former director general of Punjab police, who is credited with breaking the back of Khalistani militancy, to Gujarat.

Gill met Modi and state director general of police K. Chakrovarty last night and discussed the situation in the state. He also met other state officials.

Despite the official announcement about the appointment, there was no word from any senior minister or top officials. Government spokesman Purshottam Rupala, when contacted, said: "We have issued a statement. That is what we have to say."

A senior official of information department in state capital Gandhinagar said he did not know why the government feigned ignorance about the appointment. "This is something only the chief minister can answer," he said.

But the VHP was more forthcoming. A senior leader of the outfit, who claims to be close to Modi, said the state government did not know how to react to the Centre's decision to send Gill as security advisor. It was also against the wishes of Modi, who felt humiliated. The chief minis-

ter, he said, was extremely annoyed because the Centre had "imposed" Gill on the state government.

Sources said the government had to eventually fall in line as Modi could not afford to defy both Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and home minister L.K. Advani, who wanted Gill to take charge as security adviser to contain the communal violence. Gill will be reporting directly to the Centre.

The VHP, aware of Gill's track record, has reasons to worry, but says every successful man "cannot succeed" everywhere. "What does he know about Gujarat?" asked a state VHP leader. "He cannot do anything in Gujarat because the problem here is not law and order but political. The root cause are politicians."

Senior police officials in the state are also sceptical about how far Gill could exercise his powers. According to them, if they had been given a free hand in cracking down on the rioters, they could have long brought the situation under control.

A section of people feels the supercop should have been brought in earlier when the frenzy was at its peak.

Church plea

Delhi archbishop Vincent M. Concessao has urged minority groups to stand together and oppose the "anti-national movements of misguided elements" and to be alert against perpetrators of violence.

In a letter to all Parish priests in the archdiocese of Delhi to be read tomorrow at all masses in churches and public chapels of the archdiocese, Concessao called the violence in Gujarat after the "ugly" incident at Godhra a "state-sponsored 'genocide' against a minority community". "The situation is terrible and whatever one does, it will take a very long time for the situation to normalise the traumatised minority and the hate filled psyche of the perpetrators of the violence," he added.

THE TELEGRAPH

SC slaps notice on Gujarat govt

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI, May 3. — The Supreme Court today issued notices to the Gujarat government, its home secretary and the DGP on a petition seeking a CBI probe into recent communal strife in the state, including the Godhra carnage, in which 1,000 lives have been lost.

A three-judge Bench of Chief Justice Mr SP Bharucha, Mr Justice BN Kirpal and Mr Justice Shivaraj V Patil issued the notices after hearing Mr Anil Divan, counsel for petitioner Mr DN Pathak and 15 others, all of whom claimed to be social activists.

The Bench ordered listing of the petition for hearing along with a PIL filed by Mallika Sarabhai and others, who alleged the state machinery was biased against the minorities during the recent riots and sought setting up of a Special Investigating Team for probe. The Court, on Sarabhai's petition, had issued notices to

Mr Narendra Modi, the VHP and BJP.

Mr Pathak and others sought a direction from the Court to Gujarat to hand over to the CBI the ongoing probe into all incidents of communal violence, looting, arson, murder and rape that took place on and after 27 February. The petitioners also requested the

Bhandari report

NEW DELHI, May 3. — Gujarat Governor Mr SS Bhandari has reported to the President that there is no breakdown of the Constitutional mechanism in the state. "These are routine communications sent to the President," he said. The reports mention the situation in the state in the wake of widespread communal violence, and list the administration's efforts to control riots in Ahmedabad and elsewhere, and the state of deployment in riot-hit areas. — SNS

Court to hand over to the agency the probe into all cases where "any member of the police or ruling party may have been named or indicated as accused".

The PIL also sought an order restraining the police and probe agencies to proceed with inquiries till the Court heard the matter. The cases the CBI would probe should be monitored by the Supreme Court and the agency should submit reports time to time, it said. The petitioners also requested setting up of special courts to try all cases of violence and urged the Court to set a deadline for completion of the probe. They pleaded that cases that were to be probed by the local police should be monitored by special magisterial cells.

Gill in Gujarat: Amidst conflicting reports about his appointment as security advisor to Mr Modi, former Punjab DGP Mr KPS Gill arrived in Ahmedabad today after a 30-minute meeting with Mr LK Advani in Delhi.

Gujarat relief package finalised, page 6

THE STATESMAN

54 MAY 2002

Centre-foisted Gill galls slighted Modi

FROM BASANT RAWAT

Ahmedabad, May 3: The Centre's decision to send K.P.S. Gill as security adviser to Gujarat appears to have upset chief minister Narendra Modi.

There are clear indications that Modi resents the move as it amounts to an admission of "mishandling of the law and order situation by the state government".

Although the supercop's appointment has to be approved by Modi, the Centre's decision is being seen as a slap in the face of the chief minister, who has been putting up a brave front in the face of persistent attacks from political rivals.

Gill, credited with breaking the back of militancy in Punjab as director-general of police, arrived here today and was camping at the IPS Officers' Mess, but it was not clear what his brief was.

Before leaving Delhi, Gill had a meeting with home minister L.K. Advani. If that was the seal at the highest level of government on his mission, BJP spokesman V.K. Malhotra suggested otherwise. He said Gill had not yet been appointed security adviser and had gone to Ahmedabad only to speak to Modi and assess the situation. He is expected to meet the chief minister tomorrow.

Although Gill is already in Ahmedabad, senior ministers and state government officials say they have not officially heard about the appointment. State home minister Gordhan Zadhaphia and government spokesman Purshottam Rupala said they had no idea about Gill being appointed by the Centre. "Abhitak aisa kuch nahi hai (As

of now there is no such move)," they said.

"We do not know whether he is coming as security adviser or is on a personal visit," a senior official said.

No one was ready to go off record, but it was clear that the state government had not asked the Centre to send Gill or any other security expert. The appointment is being seen as Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's way of demonstrating a lack of confidence in Modi.

A source in capital Gandhinagar said Gill will report directly to the Prime Minister's Office. He is believed to be coming with full authority to take independent decisions, which is bound to upset the state government, said a BJP insider.

Senior officials in Delhi, however, say Gill will get "the full support of the Gujarat chief minister", as the state government is keen on bringing the violence under control.

Despatching Gill as security adviser assumes significance also in light of the fact that the Centre has decided to support the Opposition-sponsored motion on Gujarat in the Rajya Sabha and claims that it has already taken steps to intervene under Article 355 of the Constitution.

The Congress welcomed the Centre's decision. Former chief minister and state unit chief Amarsinh Chaudhary said it was "a welcome development". "We Congressmen are happy about it because it shows that Atal Bihari Vajpayee wants to clip the wings of Modi." But at the same time, he said, Gill's appointment could demoralise the police force as he is a retired officer who will be issuing orders to the director-general of police.

THE TELEGRAPH

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George mounts defence

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, May 3: George Fernandes today tried to wriggle out of the trouble he had landed in while defending Narendra Modi, saying he had no intention of showing disrespect to women during his Tuesday's speech in the Lok Sabha.

The clarification coincided with reports that some women MPs were planning to approach the President, seeking action against the defence minister.

"I wish to categorically state that nowhere in my speech was there even a remotest attempt to disrespect women of our country for whose dignity and welfare I have fought all through my life," Fernandes said.

During the heated debate on

the Gujarat motion, Fernandes had said this was "not the first time that riots started in Gujarat" or women were "ill-treated and subjected to crimes like rape and burnt alive".

Later, three women MPs — two from the Congress and one from the CPM — said they would collect signatures from all women members and write to deputy Speaker P.M. Sayeed demanding a discussion on the comments. They also sought an apology from Fernandes. Today, some women's organisations led by CPM leader Brinda Karat demonstrated outside his residence.

Fernandes blamed the media for trying to "distort" what he had said. The comments "were made in the context of pointing out the hypocrisy of the Congress which was the presiding

government when numerous instances of such abominable violence occurred", he said. "I also made the statement to show the futility of repeatedly narrating such incidents in the House."

This is not the first time that top BJP and government leaders have blamed potentially volatile statements on distortion.

After his widely criticised speech at the Goa conclave, Atal Bihari Vajpayee had issued a clarification, saying it contained nothing against either Islam or Muslims. Vajpayee was reported to have labelled the entire community "separatist" and blamed them for creating trouble "wherever they live". Modi, too, had said he was misquoted after reports alleged that he had used Isaac Newton's theory of motion to justify the riots.

4 MAY 2002

THE TELEGRAPH

5 MAY 2002

Exercise in delusion

Peace marches mock the tragedy in Gujarat

96-8

IN Ahmedabad, it is peak season for disaster tourists. More than two months after the unrelenting violence began in Gujarat, the NDA organised a peace march in the city. Messrs George Fernandes and Arun Jaitley hopped down from New Delhi, Narendra Modi joined them from Gandhinagar, and together they led a walkathon in which security personnel were easier to spot than the rallyists, and the designer-capped rallyists could be clearly marked out from the people. Nothing underlined the superficiality of the affair more than the fact that violence broke out on the rallyists' route soon after they vacated it. It is Atal Bihari Vajpayee's turn now. The prime minister, it is said, will participate in a similar show proposed by the NDA allies in the future. Surely the BJP and its partners don't believe there are any takers in Ahmedabad or outside for these belated and stagemanaged displays of sincerity and solicitousness? As daily reports detail the continuing violence and constitutional breakdown in the state, someone ought to tell the prime minister and his men that these effete gestures only insult the injured people of the state.

It will be terribly difficult for anybody to stake claim to the high moral ground in Gujarat for a long time to come. It is not just the obviously cosmetic peace marches that will prove inadequate to that task. Even Ram Vilas Paswan's resignation from the NDA, ostensibly on account of Gujarat, has failed to deliver the moral gloss. Paswan would have everyone believe that his decision to lead his four MPs out of the ruling coalition has to

do with his anguish over Gujarat. That explanation is pitifully lacking in conviction. Over two months after the violence broke out in Gujarat and at the heels of the pact the BJP has recently sewn up with Mayawati, it requires no skills of political analysis to point out that the real provocation for Paswan lies not in Gujarat but in Uttar Pradesh. Paswan was evidently threatened by the BSP leader challenging his monopoly over the 'Dalit voice' in the NDA.

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Against Gujarat's grim landscape, political posturing, especially from within the ruling establishment, is immediately shown up for what it is. Violence continues to rage in the state. As this paper has reported, even the belated promises the prime minister made to the refugees in the relief camps remain unmet. They remain huddled in insanitary, miserable conditions. They are forced to make do with insufficient rations of food and water, inadequate toilet facilities, meagre medical attention, and a miserly trickle of compensation. These men, women and children are still fearful of venturing out of the tentative shelters to resume their normal lives. And through it all, Gujarat Minister of State for Home remains preoccupied with his theory on Godhra. Speaking to this paper, the MoS Home has cited 'events since 1927' to prove that Godhra has an 'anti-national' history. His dossier on Godhra is presumably the only progress the Modi government has made so far towards punishing the guilty. In these circumstances, the least the prime minister can do is to refuse to join the lengthening queue of disaster tourists to the state.

Gujarat communities head for talks table

GANDHINAGAR, May 2. — Muslim leaders in Gujarat are set for a "face-off" next week with representatives of the RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal, whom they hold responsible for the present crisis in the state. The meet has been called at the behest of the National Commission for Minorities.

The Muslim delegation for the meet will comprise 15 delegates, including Mufti Sahbeer Ahmed, *imam* of Ahmedabad's Jama Masjid. Dr Pravin Togadia of the VHP, Mr Amritbhai and Mr Dilip Trivedi of the RSS, will attend. Mr Modi has also agreed to meet representatives of the Muslim community.

NCM members also met nearly 100 Muslim leaders and representatives of three Hindu organisations today. Mr Tarlochan Singh, NCM vice-chairman, said the panel commissioner had explained to Muslim leaders that "there were no allegations against the entire Hindu community ... the accusing finger was being pointed at RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal members". Since these organisations were at the receiving end, "a dialogue" was desirable, he said. And Hindu leaders who met Commission members said vested political interests were not letting peace return to Gujarat.

Commission members met Mr Modi and urged him to meet representatives of the Muslim community next week. "The chief minister told us he has his own version of the events in Gujarat, but no one accepts it." — SNS
Gill Modi's new security advisor: Former Punjab police chief Mr KPS Gill was today appointed security advisor to Mr Modi to bolster the efforts to check the violence, adds PTI from New Delhi. Mr Gill is likely to assume his new post tomorrow, official sources said.

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MODI AND THE PEACE MARCH

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NONE WILL GRUDGE attempts at mobilising the people in a campaign for peace in Gujarat. The Army, moved into the State in the wake of the violence that broke out across Gujarat after the VHP-sponsored bandh on February 28, could certainly contain the violence and in this sense achieved what was not possible (for obvious reasons) by the civil administration in the State. But then, the men in uniform cannot be allowed to stay on for good. Apart from the fact that the Army is equipped (and trained) essentially to protect the borders, the presence of its units in the various towns could help in building confidence among the people, particularly those who detest fratricidal violence. The jawans in the various towns, indeed, could deter the storm troopers who indulged in killing, loot and arson soon after February 27 from carrying on with their violent ways. This, however, is not the end game and it is important that the people across the State are mobilised against violence. It is also important that such an attempt, at least at this stage, will have to involve a cross section of members from the political establishment.

But then, the initiative by Union Defence Minister, George Fernandes, along with the various fora representing business enterprises in the State cannot lead to the desired end as long as the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, is directly involved in it. It may be true that any effort to keep out the Chief Minister of the State from a peace march would look odd. But then, Mr. Modi is guilty of having not just failed in his duty as Chief Minister to ensure protection of the lives and property of the citizens in the State but is perceived as having empathised with the storm troopers of the various Sangh Parivar outfits who went about killing and maiming men, women and children from among the minority community. This being the popular perception across the State and elsewhere, a peace march with Mr. Modi there is certainly not going to help restore con-

fidence. The efforts that began on Sunday in Ahmedabad will fail in their objective for this very reason. And given this reality, however harsh or incongruous it may sound, the imperative for Mr. Fernandes and his masters in the ruling NDA combine was to ensure that Mr. Modi stayed out of the event. That such a demand had come from even a section of those who received the peace march with enthusiasm (as has been reported) renders it necessary to keep Mr. Modi out of such campaigns at least in the coming days.

All these do not mean that the initiative to involve the people, including the victims of the violence in particular, is to be given up. The sporadic violence witnessed even in those localities that were traversed by the few hundred men on Sunday, should not detract from the utility of such an endeavour. The events since February 27 and the empathy that marked the attitude of the Narendra Modi dispensation in the State towards the violent mobs have strengthened their resolve to go further ahead with their majoritarian agenda and the storm troopers will be determined to frustrate any attempt to restore peace in Gujarat. And while it is important, even at this stage, to let the Army remain, there is the pressing need to convey to the survivors of the violence that retribution cannot be the end game. A concerted campaign involving members from the majority community alone will assure the victims that the space for reconciliation is not lost. It is for this reason that one expects that all those behind the initiative for the peace march on April 27 — Mr. Fernandes along with the representatives of industry and business — will insist that Mr. Modi and his colleagues are kept out of the initiative. This is important now because what is involved touches on not merely the image of the personalities involved but also on the very idea of a campaign against retribution. The fact that Mr. Modi is perceived to have empathised with the perpetrators of violence is something that cannot be wished away.

THE HINDU

MAY 2002

Gujarat:

(Continued from page 1)

to various government offices for information to facilitate the probe, the only feedback it has got till now is from hospitals relating to the post-mortem reports of some of the victims.

Mr Justice Shah said testimonies of children would be accepted only "if the Court is satisfied that the child understands the sanctity of the oath".

He said he will visit "some of the camps" and "some of the sites" where violence had taken place after receiving the statements and affidavits.

Mr Justice Shah said, "It will be a recommendatory report, and there will be only one final report; there is no provision for an interim report."

But the Commission, which began its work on 1 April, is unlikely to complete its task within the assigned three months. With just another fortnight left for the completion of the formalities, and with no filing submitted till date, the probe could end up as a non-starter, a government official said.

The highway to devastation

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The extent of damage all over the state can only be imagined. Our delegation visited Godhra by road from Ahmedabad and, on the way back, tried to count the number of Muslim properties that had been damaged on either side of the highway. A rough estimate of what we saw:

Between Godhra and Timba Road Station — 11 shops, 3 houses, 2 trucks; Timba Road — a mosque, 23 establishments in the main market, a large building, 4 railway quarters; between Shivalaya and Ambava — 2 trucks, some kiosks; Ambava — 11 stores/*galas*, 1 house; Thasra — 2 houses and 1 timber godown; Dakor — 16 *galas*, 2 large houses, several cars; Alina — 10 houses; Mirzapur — 1 house; Mehmudabad — 8 *galas*, Bhagyodaya Hotel, 1 *mazar*, 1 petrol pump, 1 hotel, 4 handcarts, 4 houses; near Ramod Police Station — Sarvottam Hotel; Ramol — innumerable shops and houses razed to the ground, several large factories, garages, petrol pumps, Satkar Restaurant, Sarvodaya Hotel and Supreme Hotel.

These are only those visible from the main road. We may have missed many more. All the hotels mentioned belong to members of a Muslim community known as Chelias who are hoteliers/restauranters. In the last few years they have built hotels and restaurants with seemingly "Hindu" names, many of which have prominent signboards proclaiming them to be "Pure Vegetarian". A year ago a Gujarati newspaper, *Sandesh*, published a list of all hotels and restaurants owned by them, giving all the names as if to say whatever you do, you cannot disguise the fact that the establishments are owned by Muslims. Others say that the arsonists used this list. This is probably close to the truth, for otherwise identification would not have been possible. Eyewitnesses we spoke to said that vehicles with tins of petrol and trucks were moving on the main highway without any hindrance. Many of these structures look as though they have been demolished by bulldozers. Clearly it would have required time to break these

Extracts from the report of a visit to Gujarat by the CPI(M) central committee and the All India Democratic Women's Association, March 2002

buildings into the rubble now visible. Where was the police during this time?

But what about compensation? In a situation where FIRs are not being filed in the camps and where affected and bereaved people cannot go to the police station either because they are terror-struck or because it is physically not possible to do so, the question of payment of compensation is reduced to a farce. Since in many areas all traces of the property are being removed, there is fear



Violence unlimited

that the empty spaces will be occupied by criminals and looters. As for those who have died, since FIRs regarding their killings are not being registered, not only will their dependants be denied any compensation but also their killers, whether the rioters or police personnel, will never be brought to book...

In the rural areas an even more horrible situation is being created. We were told by survivors that Muslim peasants and shop-keepers are being driven out in droves and their homes, shops, fields, livestock, implements are being torched. They are apprehensive that their land is being occupied.

...Ahmedabad looks like a

city ravaged by war. For the first time, even areas dominated by the Muslim community were targets of attack because of the connivance of the police. One such area was Bapunagar and its surroundings. Ansar Nagar, Sone ki Chali, Rahat Nagar, Medina Nagar, Akbar Nagar, Urban Nagar, along Highway 8...are all areas totally inhabited by Muslims. There are shops in front and rows of houses at the back. Nearby are high-rise buildings like Gayatri Nagar which are inhabited by the majority community. Until now, people living here felt quite secure. This time was different. Most of the people who live here are originally from Uttar Pradesh but have been in Ahmedabad for at least three generations since their ancestors had all come to work in the textile mills. After the mills closed down, many of them work in small factories as daily wagers, petty vendors, drivers, shopkeepers, tradesmen or own small businesses. The houses are *pucca* and built in rows on single or double-storied tenements. There is a large *madrassah*, Qasimul uloom, and a large mosque, Medina Masjid.

Our delegation went around much of the area. We were accompanied by Shahabuddin, a CPI(M) and CITU leader who lives in the area and has been actively involved in the relief work, and many others of the area including Firoze, Rajabhai, Wali Mohammed and a few women. We saw that some of the families whose homes, although damaged, had not been destroyed completely were living in them and cooking their own food. Even they had lost most of their possession. Many others had to live in the camps because their homes had been completely burnt down.

Akbar Nagar was a hutment colony just behind the office of the assistant commissioner of police, "H" division. It had been completely destroyed: burnt and then razed down and almost all traces of its existence had been obliterated. More than 300 families from here were in the Bapunagar Aman Chowk camp.

TO BE CONCLUDED

Violence continues as Fernandes leads peace march

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, APRIL 28. Even as the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, led a peace rally in the walled city areas, five persons were killed in Ahmedabad and Vadodara and about a dozen injured in police firing and stabbing today.

The spot near the Kalupur railway station from where Mr. Fernandes began the peace march in the morning came under indefinite curfew a few hours later as violent mobs indulged in stoning, looting and arson. An indefinite curfew was also clamped in areas under the Gomtipur police station following incidents of stabbing and arson. While one person was killed in overnight violence in Vadodara, three were killed in police firing in Chandola Talao area in Maninagar locality in Ahmedabad and one person was stabbed to death and two persons, including a woman, were injured in stabbing in Gomtipur locality.

Modi participates

Hundreds of people from all communities and all walks of life, NCC cadets, prominent citizens and religious leaders, children and students, joined the march organised by the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry and led by Mr. Fernandes, who was flanked by the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, and the Union Law Minister, Arun Jaitley.

The first major peace effort since the trouble began exactly two months ago in the aftermath of the Godhra carnage on

February 27, the rally was received enthusiastically by both the Hindu and Muslim leaders as it started from Manilal Mansion near Kalupur railway station and passed through a 3-km stretch on the Relief Road culminating in a public meeting in Sardar Baug at Lal Darwaja.

Mr. Modi's presence, which was kept a closely guarded secret till the last moment, however, caused some heartburn.

A couple of active members of the chamber refused to join the rally because of the Chief Minister's presence. Some Muslim youths said they would have "enforced" a "janata" curfew (public curfew) among Muslims if they had known that Mr. Modi would be attending the rally. In view of the prevailing conditions, strict security measures were taken to ensure a peaceful rally. At some sensitive points, the heavy deployment of security staff outnumbered even the rallyists. Besides the mounted police, the Rapid Action Force and other para-military forces, police was deployed at rooftops to keep a watch on the miscreants. The Director-General of Police, K. Chakravarthi, personally supervised the security arrangements.

'Forget the past'

Later, addressing the rally, Mr. Fernandes appealed to the people to work unitedly for peace "forgetting the past and forgiving the evil-doers to build a new tomorrow."

Mr. Jaitley said the rally was a major step forward and was sure to succeed. A message would go to the people that Guj-

arat wanted peace and if a few miscreants tried to disrupt peace, they would have to be identified and exposed to restore normality in the State.

Mr. Modi said the restoration of confidence was of paramount importance to establish peace but efforts in this direction were being shattered by rumour mongering and at times by "exaggerated media coverage".

Within hours after the march ended, violence broke out in Kalupur and several localities on the route virtually making a mockery of the peace efforts.

Violent mobs indulged in stoning and arson in Dhana-suthar-ni-Pole, Panchpatti and other areas in Kalupur while a number of houses and huts in Saraspur locality were set afire forcing the police to impose indefinite curfew at 5.15 p.m. in the entire Kalupur locality. Largescale violence broke out in Chandola Lake area under Maninagar police station on Saturday night as groups of people suddenly took to the streets and indulged in heavy stone throwing, looting and arson forcing the police to burst teargas shells and fire 51 rounds in which three persons were killed and nine were injured.

Though it was relatively a quiet day in Vadodara, violence broke out in Vadi locality despite the indefinite curfew this afternoon with groups of people indulging in stone throwing, arson and stabbing. At least three incidents of stabbing were reported from Vadi and Panigate areas while a posh hotel in Vadi area was set afire by violent mobs.

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'Modi Govt. must be dismissed'

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Prominent personalities from various fields have expressed serious concern at the situation in Gujarat and called upon all Indians to put pressure on the Prime Minister to dismiss the Narendra Modi Government in the State.

Participants at the 'Siting Secularism Conference', held at the Oberlin College, Ohio, U.S., recently, said in a statement:

We the participants of the Siting Secularism Conference express our serious concern at the state-sponsored pogrom launched against Muslims of Gujarat for over 45 days now.

The incident at Godhra shocked us all and was immediately condemned by various religious and human rights organisations.

However, we unequivocally condemn the cynical use of that incident by the RSS, BJP, VHP and Bajrang Dal and the Gujarat State machinery to justify the massacre that followed.

Several fact-finding reports have revealed the pre-meditated nature of the violence and the planned targeting of Muslim lives and businesses with the full backing and connivance of the police and State administration.

Every government official who took a principled position has been targeted, harassed and transferred.

There is also no doubt that the VHP and the RSS have been the primary organisers of the carnage in Gujarat.

We are deeply alarmed by the continued refusal of the Indian Government to take action against the Government of Gujarat headed by Narendra Modi and by the recent public pronouncements of India's Prime Minister, Atal Be-

hari Vajpayee, describing the Muslim communities of India and elsewhere as trouble-makers.

We are equally concerned at the prospect of elections being held in the State of Gujarat under the present conditions where the Muslim community is in a state of siege.

We call upon all Indians to:

— Put pressure on the Prime Minister of India to dismiss the Government of Narendra Modi and commence criminal proceedings against the Gujarat Government and Sangh Parivar organisations.

— Expose the use to which donations to the VHP are being put, especially from abroad.

— Build sub continental solidarities with others involved in contesting and fighting religious intolerance and the politics of religious hatred in South Asia

The 53 signatories include: Gauri Viswanathan (Professor of English and Comparative Literature,

Columbia University, New York, U.S.), Partha Chatterjee (Professor of Political Science and Director, CSSSC, Calcutta), Shyam Benegal (Film maker, Bombay), Nira Benegal (Bombay), Mushirul Hasan (Director, Academy of Third World Studies, Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi), Kum Kum Sangari (Nehru Memorial Library, New Delhi), Ravi S. Vasudevan (Fellow, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi), Nivedita Menon (Delhi University), Ravina Agarwal (Assoc. Professor of Anthropology, Smith College, U.S.), Rachel Sturman (Asst. Professor of South Asian History; Fellow, Society of Fellows, University of Michigan, U.S.), Upendra Baxi (Professor of Law, University of Warwick, U.K.)

4 APR 2002

Gujarat peace march urges end to hatred

Forget the past, restore mutual trust: Fernandes

Times News Network & Agencies

AHMEDABAD: People from different communities, led by defence minister George Fernandes, took out a peace march here on Sunday with an appeal to forget the past and isolate the perpetrators of the communal carnage in Gujarat.

Amidst tight security, the marchers, carrying placards and banners demanding an immediate end to the "insane communal rage", wound their way through the lanes and by-lanes of the riot-hit areas.

Organised by the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the peace march was flagged off by former assembly speaker Kundanlal Dholakia from Manilal Mansion on Relief Road at 8.45 a.m. While the defence minister set the pace with his brisk walk, Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi joined the rally midway. The rally, which had under a thousand participants initially, later shrunk by nearly half.

Gun-toting police and central forces personnel in strength stood guard at strategic positions and rooftops to prevent any untoward incident.

Besides Mr Modi and Mr Fernandes, others who participated in the rally included Union law minister Arun Jaitley, Samata Party leader Jaya Jaitley and a host of BJP and Congress leaders. At every corner of the streets, the locals stood and watched the rally from behind the barricades and waited to narrate their litany of woes to the leaders or at least to wave out to them and greet them.

The rally took less than an hour to complete the stretch of nearly three kilometres, passing by the ruins of burnt and looted shops, Kalupur Police Station, Zakaria Masjid, Zaveriwad, Patharkuva, Patwa

Sheri, Relief Cinema and then culminated into a public meeting at Sardar Baug.

Addressing the gathering, Mr Modi said, "Gujarat should be brought back onto the track of humanity. It is time to forget the past and to isolate those who are indulging in violence."

Mr Fernandes and other political leaders, who also addressed the gathering, made a passionate plea for the return of peace in the state. "Gujarat is desperately in need of re-establishing mutual trust between various communities," Mr Modi said, adding, "it is

ironic that today we have faith only in rumours and not among the people."

He said it was the "wild-fire of rumours" that primarily contributed towards violence causing great damage to Gujarat. He cautioned against circulation of "illegal pamphlets" and "sensationalisation in media".

Mr Fernandes hoped the march would go a long way in re-establishing mutual trust. "We have to forget the past," he said and cited the example of Vietnamese people, who after fighting a fierce battle against Americans had started working together with them.

Meanwhile, fresh violence broke out on Sunday in the labour-dominated areas of the city hours after Mr Fernandes ended the peace march.

Indefinite curfew was re-imposed in the Gomtipur area in the afternoon when a person was stabbed near Gomtipur Darwaja. This was followed by several incidents of stone-throwing, crude bomb blasts and even reports of firing.

At least six persons were killed, three each in Baroda and Ahmedabad, and 22 injured in police firing and group clashes in riot-torn Gujarat since Saturday night.



Narendra Modi

Gujarat should be brought back onto the track of humanity. It is time to forget the past and to isolate those who are indulging in violence

TDP may decide on censure vote today

HYDERABAD: Telugu Desam Party chief and Andhra Pradesh chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu began consulting his MPs individually on Sunday evening to elicit their opinions on the crucial issue of voting on a censure motion against the government.

After convening a meeting of the parliamentary party earlier in the day to take stock of the emerging political situation, Mr Naidu began having a one-to-one meeting with MPs to firm up the strategy to be adopted for the April 30 voting in the Lok Sabha.

The meeting, being held at Mr Naidu's

Jubilee Hills residence, was likely to continue till late in the night and the party's politburo was expected to meet on Monday, TDP sources said.

The TDP, a key outside supporter of the NDA government, was understood to have decided to wait for Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's reply in the Lok Sabha before announcing its stand on which way to vote on the censure motion over the Gujarat issue. The TDP sources quoted Mr Naidu as saying that he was under no pressure to take a decision in a hurry and that the announcement about the party's stand would be made at an appropriate time.

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It takes a few to cook up a frenzy

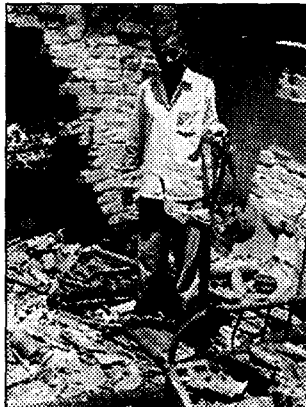
The administration's account of the deaths as on March 11 is as follows: On February 28, in village Pandunda under taluka Khanpur, number of dead: one. On the same day, in village Divda (Khanpur), number of dead: one. On March 1, in village Rinchia (Ghoganbi), number of dead: one. On the same day, in village Devada (Kadana), number of dead: one. On the same day, in village Pandharwa (Khanpur), number of dead: 21. In village Halol (Halol), number of dead: five. On March 2, in village Kalol (Kalol), number of dead: 16. In village Linnawada (Linnawada), number of dead: one. In village Limdia (Khanpur), number of dead: eight. In village Aral (Kalol), number of dead: seven. In village Rameshra (Halol), number of dead: two. Between March 3 and 4, number of dead: none. On March 5, in village Anjanvar (Santrampur), number of dead: eight. Between March 6 and 7, number of dead: none.

Maulvi Husain Umarji, Messrs. Khatudi, A.A. Hasan, Charkha, all advocates, and others who are organizers of the camp told us that Godhra has a mixed population, which is 40 per cent Muslim and 60 per cent Hindu. While there was rioting in the town in 1980, since then, there have been no incidents, not even in 1992. There are individual disputes, they say, that people try to convert into communal friction, but there have been no communal clashes in this entire period.

They said, however, that political events were vitiating the atmosphere for some time before February 27. The Bharatiya Janata Party had not been a major political force in the area but in the last parliamentary election, a BJP member of parliament, Bhupendra Singh Solanki, was elected. He had been arrested in 1989 for fomenting communal tension. There were no members of legislative assemblies from that party in the district. After the last town area elections, Raju Darji of the BJP was elected president. In April 2001, a no-confidence motion against him was moved by Mohammed Hasan, who had the support of 24 corporators, eight of whom were Hindus. The motion was passed and,

Extracts from the report of a visit to Gujarat by the CPI(M) central committee and the All India Democratic Women's Association, March 2002

in May, Mohd Hasan was elected president of the town area. He is now under arrest as the main accused in the Sabarmati Express case. He has no previous criminal history. We were told that as far as the camp organizers knew, the ghastly event of February 27 was triggered off by an altercation between tea vendors, at least one of whom was a Muslim, and *kar sevaks*.



Remains of the day

They did not think that it was a pre-meditated attack and were convinced that the political events of the town were also responsible for the way in which the incident was being presented by BJP leaders. They believed that with the political isolation of the BJP, this type of violence was geared only to regaining its hold in view of the elections next year.

They told us that no incident of any kind took place in Godhra town after the train atrocity on Feb 27. But later, planned attacks were made from February 28 till March 3. The attacks, though fewer, were continuing till the date of our visit, March 11.

According to the Gujarat government, about 600 people have been killed since February 27 in incidents of arson, communal killings and police and "private" firing.

This is a gross underestimate. Since charred bodies are still being recovered, and the killings have not yet stopped, this figure is bound to go up. Relief organizations taking details from the camps put the figure at closer to 2,000. Estimates of damage and destruction of property are being placed at more than Rs 3,000 crore in losses in Ahmedabad alone.

Many mosques, *dargahs* and *mazars* have been broken and destroyed...The mazar of the revered poet, Vali Gujarati (opposite the Police Commissioner's office) was not only broken on February 28, but subsequently a saffron flag was placed on it. After that was removed by the police, the shrine was completely obliterated and a tarmac road was built on the spot. The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation has denied any responsibility as far as the road construction is concerned, but it is quite clear that this could not have been done without the involvement of some government agency. At least ten mosques have been "converted" into temples where *puja* is being held regularly. The Gumte Masjid, a 16th century monument, has been broken down by rioters. This could not have been done without the use of bulldozers. At Vasna, on the main highway to Rajkot, a large mosque has been demolished. We were told that there was a legal case in process regarding the land on which this stood and that ministers in the Gujarat government had been physically present when it was demolished.

Everywhere in Ahmedabad, shops, business establishments, buildings, homes, hotels, restaurants and small kiosks belonging to Muslims have been burnt, looted and destroyed in a planned and scientific manner. In some large shopping centres, only those shops belonging to Muslims have been burnt while others adjacent to them are untouched. This applies to restaurants, smaller shops and office-premises also. A systematic plan to break the economic backbone of an entire community to make it dependent and subordinate has been implemented.

TO BE CONCLUDED

Modi sends minister with bluster

FROM SAUMITRA DASGUPTA

New Delhi, April 27: A muddled debate on Gujarat that ran into a wall of non-sequiturs, some feel-good pop economics and lousy ornithology summed up a day of impassioned debate at the CII annual conference.

The centrepiece of the plenary sessions on the final day of the conference was the debate on Gujarat — which incidentally became the leitmotif for the entire two-day conference insinuating itself somehow into every session.

After two days of uncertainty over whether anyone from the Narendra Modi government would address the subject of communal carnage, state industry minister Suresh Mehta arrived in the capital — the first Gujarat minister to take a public platform outside the state

since the two-month mayhem began — to face the ire of civilised society.

Mehta stonewalled every charge that was thrown at him by Anu Aga, chairperson of the CII's western region and Thermax Ltd, and journalist Rajdeep Sardesai.

Aga, who toured two relief camps housing riot victims, said she had returned with horror stories of rape, murder and pillage. Mehta said facts had been twisted out of context and that Aga's story was unfounded and pure hearsay.

The Gujarat industry minister said he had been persuaded to attend the CII session on the understanding that the debate would focus on the economic fallout in Gujarat.

Mehta argued that industry's fears that investments in the state would dry up were totally unfounded. In fact, Shell had just

signed an agreement with the state government to invest Rs 5,200 crore in an LNG project in the state, while General Motors had announced its plans to expand its car project in Halol.

Moderator Naresh Chandra, former Governor of Gujarat, said the time had come to look for remedial action and a healing salve.

Earlier in the day, a bunch of economists debated growth prospects and came to the conclusion that India was a miracle economy waiting to happen. P.K. Basu, Singapore-based chief economist of Credit Suisse First Boston, said the Indian economy was the only democracy with more than 200 million people that had sustained annual real GDP growth of 5.8 per cent over a 20-year period.

The session rounded off on a weird note of pop economics.

Jairam Ramesh, who heads the Congress' economic cell, said Basu's theory was that cranes visited only those countries that grew at over 7-8 per cent.

But since India was growing at only 5.7 per cent, cranes would not be seen till it managed a higher rate of growth.

"We only see a scaffold of bamboo poles and sacking," said Ramesh, obviously referring to the sorry state of the relief camps in Gujarat.

Both Basu and Ramesh may be good at economics, but when it comes to bird-watching, they've got some way to go. India, which has racked up the second highest growth rate in Asia after China, receives migratory Siberian cranes every winter. The cranes come from Russia which, incidentally, has a growth rate of just 4.3 per cent.

Riot ripple reaches industry

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 26: Gujarat has finally exploded on the crest of Indian industry.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi opened the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)'s annual session this morning by expressing fears that the Gujarat riots had scarred the country's image before foreign investors.

Finance minister Yashwant Sinha followed with a rebuttal, claiming that the world is "gung-ho about India".

Industry, which prefers to stay away from the business of politics, however, seems determined to do a post-mortem of the consequences of the two-month-

long rioting with the CII organising a special plenary session tomorrow called "Gujarat — act of faith or breach of faith".

Initially, the CII had earmarked the session for its alternative programme, which runs parallel to its plenary, but has now brought it within the plenary because industry is exercised over Gujarat. Anu Aga, chairperson of the company Thermax Ltd, toured the state and will submit her report, which may be released tomorrow. She has been scathing in her criticism of the Narendra Modi government.

Gujarat reared its head in the CII session when Sonia said the violence there had "lowered us in our own eyes" and "impacted Indian industry itself". "Foreign

direct investment would suffer because of such incidents," she added.

Sinha, who came to dinner with the business leaders, made a brave attempt to sweep the cloud of depression away. "I do not believe Gujarat (riots) will destroy the country... it was unfortunate but let us be positive."

Trying to work up enthusiasm in the slightly uneasy audience, he said: "This is celebration time. Let us celebrate the greatness of India, the opportunities India has to offer."

A Gujarat-based industrialist with interests in the chemicals business muttered in a muted comment on the minister's bid to lighten the mood: "It's hard to celebrate when the lights you see

outside your window are those lit by rioters."

When Gujarat is debated at the CII plenary tomorrow, Sinha will not be there. Nor will be anyone else from the government. There were rumours that the CII had tried to get Modi but he declined. The Gujarat government denied Modi had been invited.

The brief for the session is: Why Gujarat? Is Gujarat a Sangh parivar nursery? Will Gujarat bring down India's global rating? Would someone else have done a better job than Modi? Recreating an investment climate: what the administration should do. Has tolerance become unfashionable? We the people... What do we want? We the people... what do we do?

Gujaratis

► FROM PAGE 1

They used to run more than a hundred Gujarati-medium schools in Karachi. However, in 1971, after the bloody formation of Bangladesh based on a separate linguistic and cultural identity, the Pakistan government asked the Gujarati schools to adopt either Urdu or English as the medium of education. Now Gujarati is taught to children only at home.

However, even today, there are half-a-dozen Gujarati newspapers in Karachi — *Millat*, *Watan*, *Daily Gujarati*, *Memon Bulletin*, *Memon Samachar* and *Al Zulfikar*. The Gujaratis here still lament the closing down of *Dawn Gujarati* and *Pak Samachar*.

Farooq Memon, who was born in Pakistan but calls himself a Gujarati because his family came from the Kathiawar region, says: "A murderer is a murderer. He neither belongs to Ram nor to Rahim. It does not matter whether you are a Hindu Gujarati or a Muslim Gujarati. Today all of us feel ashamed of the events in Gujarat. Only one word used to unite us — 'Gujarati'. But today, I cannot understand what is going on in Gujarat. Even the partition riots did not last this long."

There was a time, Memon recalls, "when we went to Ahmedabad and the train crossed the Sabarmati, we knew that we were among our people. I don't know whether I would feel the same if I went now. I have fond memories of offering namaaz twice at the Ameena Masjid in Ahmedabad. But now, I have written to my relatives to somehow come here. We Gujaratis are shopkeepers and businessmen. A shopkeeper can open a shop anywhere. But if his wife and children are killed, how can he get them back?"

Memon, a secretary in a newspaper office and very active in the Gujarati community here, says India should realise that the Gujarati Muslims have made a definite choice — to be Indians. "It has been 52-years since the partition. If the Gujarati Muslims did not see themselves as Indians, they would have come to Pakistan by now. Why have they stayed on? Because they are Indians, just as the Gujarati Hindus you meet here are Pakistanis."

Sonbai, who lives in the Gujarati para and has been listening to us discussing Gujarat says: "*Baba, galat hua hai* (Whatever has happened is not right). We have a song — *Bhagwan, mein tujhe khat likhta hoon par tera pata nahin maloom* (God, I want to write to you but I don't know your address). To my Gujarati brothers in India, I say, I know the address of God. He lives within you. He cannot sanction the killing of another human being."

Ahmedabad

Times News Network

GA
AHMEDABAD: Following director-general of police K. Chakravarthi's virtual takeover of the policing of Ahmedabad, the state's largest city is swarming with senior IPS officers.

Senior officers have been posted in especially volatile police station areas like Gomitpur, Vatva, Vejalpur, Madhavpura, Shahpur, Dariapur and Bapunagar. The official line is that the presence of the officers is meant to "relieve" those riot-fatigued officers already on duty. After a fresh outbreak of violence last Sunday, Ahmedabad has been relatively calm over the last two days, but officials are not taking any chances. Seven officers of the rank of inspector-general of police, apart from superintendents of police, have been posted in the city for law and order

swarms with IPS officers

GA
This is the result of the government's concern about the continuing violence in the city. The government has also simultaneously filled up the vacancies for assistant commissioners of police.

The officers moved to these special postings are deputy commissioner of prohibition (Surat) I.M. Desai, IG (Jails) R.M.S. Brar, deputy director of the Karai academy K.K. Ojha, SRP group 3 commandant N.V. Patel, SP, CID (Crime) P.L. Jani, IG (Communications) P.P. Pande, and IG, CID (Crime) S.P. Chituri.

SP, CID (Crime) R.B. Brahmhatt has been camping in the city for more than two weeks and is now in charge of the Gomitpur and Rakhial areas.

IPS officers

GA
The city also has six companies of the BSF and 14 companies of the army deployed for law and order duties.

Meanwhile, minister of civil supplies Bharat Barot on Thursday demanded that the over 6,000 riot victims belonging to the minority community who are currently housed at the Dariyakhah Ghummat relief camp at Shahibagh be shifted out as they posed a threat to the local residents.

"There is no doubt. We have reports of anti-social activities being planned inside the camp at the local municipal school premises," Mr Barot said, adding that Wednesday's mob attack on the police commissionerate had been engineered by some of those taking shelter in the camp. "I have raised the issue with chief minister Narendra Modi. However, no decision has been taken."

9. 51
Crymat

Violence spreads to Saurashtra

By Manas Dasgupta

HO-1

26/4

AHMEDABAD, APRIL 25. Four persons were killed in violence in different parts of trouble-torn Gujarat today. An indefinite curfew was clamped on Bhavnagar, in the Saurashtra region, where six persons were injured in police firing. One person was stabbed to death in Mansa town, in Gandhinagar district, late on Wednesday. Two more persons, who

were injured in police firing and stabbing incidents during renewed violence in Gomtipur locality on Sunday, died in hospital. An elderly woman collapsed out of shock and later died after an empty teargas shell fell next to her in the Dariakhan Ghummat relief camp on Tuesday.

For the first time in two months, the Saurashtra region, which was relatively insulated

from violence, witnessed disturbances since Wednesday night. The violence was reportedly sparked off by a minor accident involving a bicycle and an autorickshaw. Following the accident, the cyclist was attacked with sharp weapons seriously injuring him. Soon people from both communities gathered and attacked each other with bombs and stones. Some houses and shops were set afire.

The miscreants also attacked two temples and damaged the idols. This led to a pitched battle between the rival groups, forcing the police to open fire in which six persons were injured. Indefinite curfew was imposed and the situation was brought under control after the Army staged a flag march.

The AICC secretary, Vayalar Ravi, and the senior leader, Salman Khurshid, participated in a 'Modi hatao dharna' organised by the Congress in front of the Sabarmati Ashram here today. Talking to presspersons, Mr. Khurshid said the Gujarat events were among the "worst attacks on humanity".

The Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry has decided to take out a peace march on a 3-km stretch in one of the worst-affected areas, Relief Road, on Sunday. It is expected that the rally, to be led by the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, would be attended by Union Ministers, including those from the State.

A delegation of State BJP MPs is to meet the President, K.R. Narayanan, in New Delhi tomorrow to apprise him of the situation, a spokesman said.

SONIA MAY VISIT GUJARAT ON MAY 1

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 25. The Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, is likely to pay a day-long visit to Gujarat on May 1, the second one in the recent past. She had earlier led an all-party delegation on a Gujarat tour soon after the outbreak of communal violence.

Ms. Gandhi was keen on visiting the State during the last break in the Parliament session but could not because of the ongoing violence. Later, she was busy with the preparations for the Congress Chief Ministers' conference in Guwahati.

The visit is aimed not only at touring the riot-affected areas and interacting with the victims but also providing a fillip to the relief work that has been undertaken by the Congress. According to sources close to the leadership, Ms. Gandhi has been repeatedly impressing upon her party-

men in Gujarat to take the lead in the relief and rehabilitation efforts. She had directed the legal cell of the party to help the people after receiving reports that the victims were having difficulty registering their FIR's.

The Congress has also decided to send 30 observers to Gujarat to assess the situation both at the ground level as well as to test the level of the State units' preparations to face the elections. The observers have been chosen from Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Picked out jointly by the AICC general secretary incharge of the State, Kamalnath, and Ahmad Patel, who has been recently appointed as political secretary to the Congress president, these observers met Ms. Gandhi last night and have been asked to assemble in Porbandar on May 1.

2019

THE HINDU

Diplomats squirm under riots glare

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, April 24: The continued violence in Gujarat has put South Block mandarins in a spot.

The brave public front notwithstanding, Indian diplomats are finding it difficult to suppress their growing frustration in defending the "indefensible" stand of the government on Gujarat.

The ministry of external affairs is also not in a position to stop foreign missions from leaking their internal assessment reports to the Indian media to share their views on the Gujarat riots.

South Block officials will, however, get an opportunity to thrash out the matter with their European counterparts within the next few days, when the Indo-British round-table talks begin in London, and also during Delhi's talks with the European Union foreign ministers early next month.

At the moment, India can only issue strong statements against the foreign missions. "We note with regret that some foreign missions in India continue to interfere in the already vigorous democratic debate going on in our country, at all levels of Indian society, on the situation in Gujarat, by deliberately leaking their internal reports or making substantive political comments on the subject," foreign ministry spokesperson Nirupama Rao said today.

Rao pointed out that Parliament, the political parties, the courts, the National Human Rights Commission, the minorities' commission, the media and intellectuals were "openly and freely debating" in minute detail the developments in the state. This was a reflection of the strength of the Indian democracy, she argued.

The spokesperson charged "some foreign countries and missions in Delhi" with "injecting themselves into the highly politically charged internal debate" and giving an impression

of "playing a partisan role".

"This is contradictory to well-established norms of diplomacy and injurious to the friendly relations that exist between India and the European Union as well as individual European countries identified in the press as sources of leaks and political interference," she stressed.

This is the second time in three days that the foreign ministry has come out with a statement asking the foreign missions not to meddle in India's internal affairs.

But many more foreign leaders came out with public statements today expressing concern over Gujarat.

Visiting Canadian minister for inter-governmental affairs Stephanie Dion was the latest to do so. But he made it clear that his views should not be seen as meddling in India's internal affairs. Here on a four-day visit, Dion said he was keen to participate in the peace rally proposed by defence minister George Fernandes.

Switzerland, which had voiced its concern yesterday, was a little cautious this afternoon. Its foreign minister, Josef Deiss, refused to comment on the issue, saying it was an internal matter of India.

But British high commissioner Rob Young, whose high commission was the first to leak its internal report to the media, today iterated that Gujarat continued to be a cause of concern. He, however, added that London appreciated and welcomed India's condemnation of the violence and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's assurance that all the people responsible for it would be punished.

If this was mild criticism, there were other foreign missions that used much stronger language. A newspaper, quoting the German internal assessment document, said Muslims were specifically targeted in Gujarat. The Dutch report, also quoted in the media, denounced the partisan police action after the Godhra attack.



National Commission for Women chief Purima Advani (centre) at the press meet. (PTI)

Last team, novel theory

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 24: The National Commission for Women (NCW), a high-ranking organisation sponsored by the Centre, was the last to tour Gujarat, after all other women's organisations had presented their reports on the riots.

The NCW is also perhaps the only women's organisation that has not blamed the Narendra Modi government for the violence. Its report, released to the press today, neither names the Modi government nor uses the word "Muslims".

"For us, all women are the same. Even one case of atrocity

is bad enough," chairperson Poorima Advani explained.

Instead of the government, the NCW heaped blame on the media. "The visual and the print media should present news in such a manner that there is no sensationalisation but a positive sense of working towards the twin goals of peace and national harmony," it said.

In a way, the statement also carried a stricture against other women's organisations that have given a micro picture of the horrors suffered by women.

The NCW report, in contrast, is replete with broad sermons to the governments at the Centre and the state. The only reference to the complicity of the state gov-

ernment in the killings is indirect. "The committee that visited Gujarat received complaints of abdication of responsibility by the police," the report says.

Instead of getting down to the incidents of outrage, the report goes over the constitution of the NCW, its mandate, the duties of the state under the Constitution, international conventions and the organisation's meetings with NGOs, ministers and government functionaries. The assessment of the violence is done away with in three paras. The sermons follow. "Now is the time to look ahead rather than backwards," says the report.

At the press conference, Advani stressed over and over again on the need to give the victims a sense of security, but refused to say whether the Modi government could do it.

The NCW chief said there had been cases of sexual atrocities, some too horrifying to narrate, and some cases where the police refused to file FIRs. But despite prodding by the media, she did not blame Modi.

Minority panel

Irrked by the government's silence on its recommendations, the National Commission for Minorities today sent a directive asking the Modi regime to submit an action taken report on the measures it was asked to take to restore normality.

DOCUMENT

Then they came
looking for us

T-13
24/4

At first, they escaped to Chundagi village which was 5 to 6 kms away and took shelter with Bijal Damor, the local MLA. Then they were asked to leave since it was not safe and they walked to Kuajher where they were given shelter in a mosque. Here Shamim...delivered...a baby girl...but they were asked to leave soon afterwards because mosques were a target of the rampaging mobs. Shamim, barely able to walk, her infant being carried by her sister, almost dragged by the others, herself, tired breathless...they somehow managed to reach village Kudra. Here some *adivasi* Naikas took pity on Shamim's condition and kept them in their huts.

B remembers: They were kind to us. Shamim's clothes were dirty. Even though the *adivasis* were poor they gave her something clean to wear. They let us rest, but then again we had to move but they came with us, escorting us to the next village Chhapadvad...We had started moving towards Panivela village...Suddenly we heard the sound of a vehicle. A truck came with people from our own village and outsiders too. They had not come to help us. They stopped us and then the madness started. They pulled my baby from my arms and threw her away. I and the other women were taken aside and raped. I was

Extracts from the report of a visit to Gujarat by the CPI(M) central committee and the All India Democratic Women's Association, March 2002

raped by three men. I was screaming. They beat me and then left me for dead. When I regained consciousness, I



Of the many ravaged

found I was alone. All around me were the dead bodies of my family, my baby girl, the new born baby. They were covered with stones. I lay there the whole night and most of the next day. I do not know when I was conscious and when unconscious. Later I was found by a police squad from Limkheda police sta-

tion...In the hospital the doctors confirmed that her medical examination had confirmed rape. She has named the people who killed her family members and those who raped her: Sailesh Bhatt, Mithest Bhatt, Vijay Maurya, Pradeep Maurya, Lala Vakil, Lala Doctor, Naresh Maurya, Jaswant Nai and Govind Nai (the last three gang-raped her). Her father and husband have been traced to another camp at Dahod and her brother, Saeed, is with her in Godhra...

Maqsuda Bibi's story: Maqsuda, large eyes, very thin, lying with her head bandaged in...the hospital... She is from Anjanwa village, district Panchmahal. She says, I was in the house with my two sons, Ifzal and Imran. They were very scared and kept crying. Our village was attacked on March 5 (long after the notorious 72 hour claim of the chief minister). I took my children and we along with four other women started running. We were caught and all of us were thrown into a well that belonged to the *sarpanch* of the village Jaisigh Dona Ghor. I was unconscious. My children were still. I lay there the whole night. I was rescued by the police the next day but my children were dead and all the four other women with me. I wish I too had died.

TO BE CONCLUDED

Modi trial by numbers

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 23

9-18
Wijnat

LOK SABHA Deputy Speaker PM Sayeed today ended the parliamentary logjam by accepting the Opposition demand for a debate on Gujarat with a censure vote.

In his ruling this morning, Sayeed knocked down the Government's stand that the gravity of the situation did not warrant such a discussion. He held that Gujarat was indeed a matter of "general public interest" within the clauses of Rule 184 that allows such a debate and vote. Later, the House business advisory committee fixed April 30 for the vote after it was agreed that all budgetary matters, including the Finance Bill, would be passed by April 29.

There was no protest from the Government's side as the Deputy Speaker's ruling requires to be accepted without question, under the rules. While the CPI(M) and the Congress welcomed the decision and asked all secular parties to vote in the motion, the Prime Minister described Say-

Where they stand

9-18
Wijnat

HT-1

2A/9

TDP: Keeping the cards close to its chest. Doesn't want to topple the Govt and force snap polls. Looking for an honourable exit by not voting, a stormy walkout could be one option

Trinamool: Has declared it won't vote against the Govt

PMK: Won't vote against Govt

eed's decision as "unfortunate".

The Deputy Speaker, whose earlier efforts to break the deadlock had failed, said he had to take a decision since the Lok Sabha could not waste any more time as important financial business had come to a standstill. Besides, he said, there were precedents when issues concerning States had been discussed in the Lok Sabha under Rule 184. In 1997, a motion on the Centre's attitude towards Bihar was initially taken up as an adjournment motion and later converted into

a motion under Rule 184.

Sayeed reminded the MPs: "Under Article 355, it is the duty of the Union to protect every State against internal disturbance and ensure that the governance of every State is carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution."

He said though the Gujarat situation had been discussed earlier, "there have been serious incidents of widespread violence even subsequent to that". The National Human Rights Commission, the Minorities Commission and independent women activists of national repute have commented on the gravity of the situation in the State, he said.

"The gravity of the ground situation is also self-evident from the fact that the Army has been called in. Its deployment continues. Thus the Gujarat situation cannot be construed as an ordinary law and order matter which is the concern only of the State Government," Sayeed added.

■ **Holland, Germany slam India, p6**

Furore over Gujarat exam paper

HT 6
29/4

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 23

THE OPPOSITION in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday was furious over a report alleging that the English paper of the Gujarat Higher Secondary examination asked students to work out grammar questions by examining "Nazi solutions".

Congress deputy leader Shivraj Patil said the question paper asked students to transform sentences as directed. "If you don't like people kill them" (remove 'if', it said).

Another question on joining of sentences stated: "There are two solutions. One of them is the Nazi solution. If you don't like people kill them, segregate them. Then strut up and down. Proclaim that you are the salt of the earth."

Later, BJP spokesperson VK Malhotra circulated copies of a clarification by Gujarat Secondary Education Board chairman PV Trivedi discounting the report. He said the questions were taken from "Tolerance" written by EM Foster from the approved textbook of Standard XII. He also said this particular question paper was set by a minority member five to

eight months in advance, that is before the outbreak of the current wave of violence in Gujarat.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour, Patil said he was not sure about the authenticity of the report but if it was true such questions could be harmful to students' psychology.

Urging the Government to clarify the situation, Patil said Education was a subject in the Concurrent list for which both the Centre and State governments are responsible. Patil's remarks drew protests from BJP members Kharabela Swain and Kirti Azad who said his concern was hypothetical.

Deputy Speaker PM Sayeed objected to their opposition saying that he had exercised his discretion in asking Patil to speak.

RS deadlock: Although the Lok Sabha impasse over the Gujarat debate is over, Rajya Sabha's normal functioning from tomorrow is still uncertain because of the Government's reluctance to agree for a debate under Rule 170. The Upper House was adjourned for the seventh day today as the Government- Opposition confrontation on the issue continued.

29 APR 2002

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Opposition joining hands for big battle

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 22. The Opposition said today that they were "duty-bound" to criticise the Government and "expose its wrong-doing in Gujarat" where the scale of the attack against innocent people was unprecedented even in the history of many "ugly riots" in India.

Before Parliament assembles tomorrow, a meeting of the leaders of Opposition parties has been called by the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi. The BJP parliamentary party is also scheduled to meet where the party's strategy would be discussed in the event of the Deputy Speaker, P.M. Sayeed, allowing a discussion on the Gujarat violence under a substantive motion with voting. The daily meeting of the ruling National Democratic Alliance floor leaders will not take place tomorrow.

The CPI (M) parliamentary party leader, Somnath Chatterjee, met Ms. Gandhi today for 40 minutes to discuss the Opposition strategy. Later he told reporters: "We want to focus on the fact that the Leader of the House (the Prime Minister) has not taken a single initiative to resolve the problem of the parliamentary deadlock." He

hoped the chair would exercise its authority and allow a discussion under Rule 184 on as important a matter as the violence that had been rocking Gujarat continuously for over 50 days. He also said that contrary to the BJP claim that State subjects could not and should not be discussed in Parliament, "there have been precedents in 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th Lok Sabhas."

Congress to blame: BJP

The BJP today directly blamed the Congress for the renewed violence in Gujarat on Sunday in which 17 persons were reported killed, many in police firing.

The party spokesperson, V.K. Malhotra, said the blame lay squarely with the main Opposition party for the two "sad developments", the renewed violence in Gujarat and the continued impasse in Parliament.

Sunday's violence was not a riot between two communities but between "Muslim mobs and the police." Although "Hindus had decided not to take out Ramnavmi processions, at a place where 'Ram dhun' was being played there was an attack (by Muslim mobs)." Police then opened fire to control the mob and "many were killed by

police bullets."

He said the Congress had not only stalled Parliament but had prevented Muslim students from taking their examinations. Its leader, Kamal Nath, had admitted this when he recently stated that "the Congress Party would take action against those (Congressmen) who had issued pamphlets asking Muslim students to boycott the examinations." When questioned, Mr. Malhotra said that he was quoting Kamal Nath on the basis of a newspaper report in a Gujarati daily.

However, when Kamal Nath was contacted he said that he had not issued any such statement. "Where is the question of my issuing any such statement when it was the Congress which took the initiative to ensure a secure environment was created for Muslim students to enable them to give their examinations?" It was the Congress which had insisted that a second chance to write examinations be given to those students who could not take them in the first round due to lack of security. "And let me point out, providing security to the students irrespective of their religion, was entirely the responsibility of the BJP Government in the State."

SUNDAY TOLL RISES TO 24 IN AHMEDABAD

Fresh violence scalds Gujarat

Statesman News Service

GANDHINAGAR, April 22. — In a fresh bout of violence today, seven persons were killed in Shahpur, Berhampur, Khanpur and Mirzapur localities of Ahmedabad; two in police firing and five in incidents of stabbing. Sixty-four people, mostly women and children, were injured in the firing. Of the 150 injured in Sunday's violence, six succumbed to injuries today, taking the toll from 18 to 24.

Houses and shops were set ablaze and incidents of stone-throwing reported from Khanpur, Nagoriwad and Shahpur. Indefinite curfew has been clamped on these areas and the Army has been deployed. RAF and CISF companies are patrolling the streets. Indefinite curfew remains in force in Gomtipur, Bapunagar and Rakhial. Curfew also continues in Kadi town of Mehsana and Kapadvanj and Mehmdavad talukas, police said.

Reacting to yesterday's violence that left 24 dead, the minister of state for home Mr Gordhan Zaphadia today said he does not feel the deaths in police firing merit an inquiry. According to him, most of the deaths were due to stabbing and 'private' firing. Reports, however, indicated that the police retaliation at Gomtipur on Sunday, fol-

owing the stabbing of constable Amar Suresh Rao Patil, was excessive. The stabbing provoked severe police response in Gomtipur, Kagadipet, Shahpur and Bapunagar areas. The official toll in the violence post-Godhra has now crossed 850.

The minister said Constable Patil was accosted by a mob on his way to work. His motorcycle was stopped and he was taken to a place of worship, where he was killed. He said more than 100 were injured in the violence and "large numbers" were arrested. Blaming the Congress for "planning Sunday's violence", Mr Zaphadia denied excess force was used to control yesterday's violence. "Action had to be taken," he reiterated.

Violence set back economy: Sinha

WASHINGTON, April 22. — Union finance minister Mr Yashwant Sinha has admitted the violence in Gujarat "has certainly impinged upon India's economy" as the state "is a very important contributor to the country's GDP". He, however, added that it would not be deleterious to India's economic growth in the long run.

Speaking to reporters here yesterday, Mr Sinha said: "What has happened in Gujarat is most unfortunate ... (and) we are all concerned." — PTI

Mr Zaphadia refuted charges that the constable was killed after he misbehaved with a woman. "Someone has to be out of his mind to make this allegation," he said.

Police records show that the maximum number of rounds were fired in Bapunagar. Nearly 280 shots were fired from .303 rifles, 22 from muskets, five from revolvers, three from 9-mm revolvers and 13 from SLRs. In Gomtipur, 34 rounds were fired from .303s, 32 from muskets and 18 from revolvers. Police fired 20 rounds from .303 rifles, 31 from muskets and 14 from revolvers in Kagadipet.

Turn to page 6

GUJARAT VIOLENCE:

(Continued from page 1)

Meanwhile, Board examinations for classes X and XII were held as scheduled today. Students residing in curfew-bound areas travelled to examination centres showing admission cards. Muslim candidates appeared at the examination centres amid tight security.

Mr Zaphadia said the violence on Sunday had not affected the new examination schedule for classes X and XII. "There was 95%-97% attendance at the centres today," he said. He reiterated that the situation in the city was "under control". He also announced a cash compensation of Rs 1 lakh and an "insurance cover" for Patil's family. **Cong admits 'mistake':** The Congress today admitted the examination boycott call given by the party to minority students of classes X and XII was a "mistake", adds PTI from Ahmedabad. PCC chief Mr Amarish Chaudhary said explanations had been sought from party members responsible for issuing the call.

RSS call: RSS chief Mr KS Sudarshan has called upon Sangh Parivar outfits and cadres to effectively counter any attack on it and become more aggressive, adds a report from Delhi. "We are countering anti-national forces on every front including the field of education, which is very important."

VHP-NCM meet: Senior VHP leaders will meet the National Commission for Minorities tomorrow to discuss the prevailing communal situation in the country, adds PTI from Delhi. The VHP would apprise the panel of the "threat posed by Islamic extremism" and the "miserable plight" of the minority Hindu community in J&K.

CPM plea: The CPI-M today called for drastic action — the first being the immediate ouster of Mr Narendra Modi — in the wake of yesterday's flare-up, adds a report from Delhi. Referring to reports that most of the victims were Muslims, the Politburo said "there can be no withdrawal of the army from violence-hit areas".

Imam notice: The First Class Magistrate of a local court has issued summons to Syed Ahmed Bukhari, Imam of Jama Masjid, to be present in his court on 20 May in connection with his utterances at a Friday prayer meeting on 19 April, adds a report from Baroda. The Congress has condemned the Imam's remarks.

9-12
23A

On the tracks of fire and hatred

The railway official said that the train arrived at 7.45 am and left at 7.50 am. He believes the chain was pulled soon after because some passengers were left on the platform. He saw these passengers running to board the train after it had pulled out. The chain-pulling occurred twice, first at 7.55 am and then at 7.58 am. If this is so, then the story that some people from the mob had climbed on to the train to stop it so that it could be attacked would not be correct.

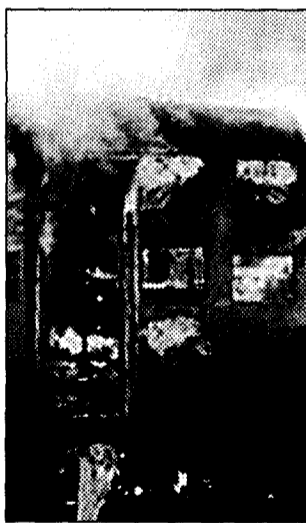
According to him, a mob of about 500-600 people (Muslims, mostly Ghanchiyas from the adjacent colony, parallel to the track) had gathered. They were shouting and could be seen stoning the train, especially S6 from across the track. There were no crowds on the other side. That is why other passengers could escape. Since the train was a few hundred metres from the platform, they could not see exactly how and when the train caught fire. But all the officials the delegation spoke to stated repeatedly that in all their experience of train accidents and burning, never had they seen a coach catch fire and burn so quickly. According to them, this could only happen if the entire coach had been doused with petrol or/and if there was inflammable material inside the coach.

They also said that in a coach meant for 72 passengers, there were at least 50 more that made it difficult for people to get out. The window shutters had been pulled down and the officials conjectured that this was perhaps to escape from the stoning.

But then, how could so much inflammable material have found its way inside to the extent that the entire coach was so badly burnt? By the time the fire-fighters came, there was no sound

Extracts from the report of a visit to Gujarat by the CPI(M) central committee and the All India Democratic Women's Association, March 2002

from inside. It was their conjecture that the victims of this terrible atrocity were mainly women and children because others stronger and bigger could reach the exit doors first. The delegation



Badly burnt

was horrified and deeply moved to hear this recounting.

Inside the burnt coach, the delegation found heaps of foodgrains, sacks stacked near the windows. There were also stoves and jerry cans. Clearly, the *kar sevaks* had taken this material to cook for themselves. This points to the possibility of inflammable substance inside the coach.

In any case, there were no

restrictions on anyone wanting to go inside. At the Iqbal Primary School camp, the administration was giving them rations and also helping them with first information reports. There were people from the rural areas of Panchmahal and Dahod districts. They have faxed 300 FIRs to the police *thanas* but are not aware how many have been registered by the police authorities.

While the situation in the town seemed comparatively under control, the situation in the rural areas is serious with about 6,000 people fleeing their homes and taking shelter in various camps. The delegation met some of the victims from the rural areas in Iqbal Primary School camp and in the hospital who are from Panchmahal and Dohad districts.

B's story:

B, wife of Y from Randhikpur village (district Dahod) is 21 years old, five months pregnant...We meet her in the camp. Frail, motionless, drained of all expression, she tells her story in a monotone as though she is speaking of someone else. Muslim houses in her village were attacked by upper caste people from her own village along with outsiders on March 1.

She and several of her family members fled. She names them: my baby girl Saleha, my mother, Halima, my sisters, Mumtaz and Munni, my brothers, Irfan and Aslam, my maternal uncle, Majeed, two of my father's sisters, Sugra and Amina, one of their husbands, Yusuf, Amina's son, and three daughters, Shamim, Mumtaz and Medina and Shamim's son Husain. Shameem she says was nearing her full term. It was difficult for both of them to run.

TO BE CONCLUDED

The few voices of sanity and humanity

Yet through all the horror of Gujarat there were also the voices of sanity and humanity. The delegation was moved by the tremendous work being done by relief workers of all communities. It also met scores of people young and old, men and women who expressed their horror and anger at the communal carnage and against the forces who planned for its occurrence. They all expressed their helplessness. There were huge mobs with the police standing by. How could we have come out against them, they asked. We are against what happened, but what could we have done? Questions that haunt the human conscience. There were cases where neighbours had saved Muslims. In some areas like in Juhapura, some Hindu families have left out of fear but their property is undamaged. The Shah Alam camp organizers are also running a camp in a *mandir* where a group of Hindu families has come. These are examples that provide some hope.

The delegation has made this detailed report available so that a wider section of people become aware of what the implementation of Hindu *rashtra* costs the nation.

...The delegation visited Godhra town in Panchmahal district on March 11 where it met the district magistrate, railway officials, railway police officials, doctors and nurses at the Civil Hospital. At the Iqbal Primary School that is being run as a relief camp for about 1,800 people, the delegation met the organizers as also the affected. It was the first day that the curfew had been lifted for the full day and was to be imposed at 6 pm.

The district magistrate, Jayanthi Ravi, told the delegation that she had got a message from the railway station SS at 8.05 am on February 27 that the Sabarmati Express was being stoned. At 8.10 am she got another message saying that some of the carriages were on fire. Her immediate concern, she said, was to ensure that the police and fire services reached there and that adequate medical arrangements were made. According to her, the police reached there within a few minutes. The police and the railway police force fired to

Extracts from the report of a visit to Gujarat by the CPI(M) central committee and the All India Democratic Women's Association, March 2002

disperse the crowd, and two Muslims were killed. The fire service reached at around 8.30 am. She also asked for additional forces. She refused to comment on any aspect of what was part of the investigations except to state that the mob was of a few hundred people from the area neighbouring the railway tracks

the members of the RPF who were there on Feb 27. Tragically, Puja Deshpande, the wife of the station master, Deepak Deshpande, had boarded the Sabarmati Express on that day to travel to Ahmedabad. She was one of those who had been burnt to death. The delegation tried to meet Deshpande but he was not available. According to the statements of the officials, the train was running late by 4 hours and 40 minutes. They had no information that *kar sevaks* were on the train. Usually, said an RPF officer, when rallyists travel, there is prior information. Thus, when the rallyists were on their way to Ayodhya, the RPF post had received a message and the particular officer had in fact accompanied them till the next



Coming out against them

and that all those injured had been rushed to the Civil Hospital and later shifted to Ahmedabad. She took the decision to impose curfew at 10 am and it was implemented fully by noon, by which time all the children in schools had been safely sent home. The train left for Ahmedabad at 12.40 pm. The delegation was impressed by the firm actions taken by the DM that probably prevented a much bigger outbreak of violence in a town described as "communally sensitive".

Later when the delegation visited the relief camp, ...the positive role of the administration in providing relief and medical aid was also mentioned by those affected. The delegation could not get details of the actual damage in Godhra as it was not possible in such a short period to move around the town. The delegation also met senior railway officials including

big junction. This, according to him, is essential because rallyists usually pick up fights at the station, not paying for the tea and so on. The RPF official said he was later informed by two licenced tea vendors that some of the *kar sevaks* refused to pay for their tea and were harassing a Muslim tea vendor on the platform. However he could not tell the delegation their names or where they lived. Thus this report could not be confirmed. When asked about a press report that a girl related to the tea vendor had been picked up, he said that he had no knowledge of such an incident but there may have been a quarrel between the tea vendor and the *kar sevaks*. According to him the police have not recorded any statements of the vendors yet because of the curfew, but will do so shortly.

TO BE CONCLUDED

UK builds up strong case against Modi

Charges against Gujarat CM could lead to request for his extradition

By Rashmee Z. Ahmed
Times News Network

LONDON: Britain-based Gujaratis are working alongside the British government to bring three cases in three separate courts across Europe against Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi.

The cases, which are to be filed separately in the British high court, the Belgian courts and, possibly, the International Court of Justice in The Hague, are expected to complement two other proposed cases against Mr Modi and his administration in India and the United States. The charges, ranging from complicity with murder to genocide, could theoretically lead to a formal request for Mr Modi's extradition, as seemed likely when Belgium court officials recently held preliminary hearings in a genocide case against Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Belgian law allows its courts to hear cases of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity, no matter where they are carried

out or by whom. Sulaiman Qazi, solicitor and cousin of British national Mohammed Aswat who was killed near Ahmedabad, said that the British government was cooperating fully in the preparation of the case, which could be filed in as little as four or five weeks.

Describing the Gujarat violence as "a crime against humanity and not against one community", Mr Qazi said he felt the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) would support them to the hilt.

"The FCO has said that high-ranking officials were responsible for the massacre of innocents and we know that is a statement of

support if it comes to extradition," Mr Qazi told *The Sunday Times of India* as he worked on a "a database consisting of hundreds of eyewitness accounts, with verifiable names, addresses and contact numbers".

Sources acknowledged that the FCO's alleged help sat oddly with a government pronouncement on Gujarat in the House of Lords in early March, when junior foreign office minister Baroness Amos "appreciated the efforts which have been made by the Indian government to restore calm" and said "the Indian authorities are seen to be doing all that they can".

Mr Qazi admitted that extradition was only one possibility. More likely, he said, "It

is a Henry Kissinger-like situation, in which the former American secretary of state's arrival in the UK will be attended by Spanish investigators seeking to interview him on Cambodia." In other words, if Mr Modi or others named were ever to set foot in the UK or anywhere in the European Union,

they would almost certainly be "interviewed" by investigators.

The British case, to be filed by four British families will not only charge the VHP, the RSS and the BJP, but also "name specific names".

Mr Qazi confirmed that British data-gathering, which took the form of a now-controversial and leaked report, had helped human rights organisations on the ground. London was apparently deeply involved in crucial data-gathering, and according to sources, two or three FCO officials had flown out from here to join the British fact-finding team in India.



Riot-hit Gujaratis go on realty flight, move to south of state

By Amarendra Jha
Times News Network

SURAT: First they ran for their lives. Now, as the communal embers gradually die in the state, they run to secure a safer future. And, with areas in south Gujarat remaining insulated from the communal fury that has engulfed the rest of the state, people are queuing up in front of the offices of real estate dealers in Surat, Navsari and Bardoli, ready to pay through their noses for peace.

Considered to be safer than cities like Ahmedabad and Vadodara, as far as communal tension is concerned, these places are attracting the riot-ravaged Gujarati,

yearning for a safe place in which to live in. And, according to local dealers, the sudden rise in demand has led to a 40 per cent hike in real estate prices in the last week.

According to a Navsari-based real estate broker who did not wish to be named, three families from Ahmedabad and one each from Godhra, Anand and Vadodara have already bought flats in Rangoonwala and Naveen Nagar, which are minority-dominated areas. They reportedly paid 40 per cent more than the market rate.

In Navsari alone, real estate developers are receiving about eight to ten inquiries every day. "A sense of helplessness seems to have gripped almost all of these prospective buyers and for them the price is not a constraint if they get a house or a flat in a locality where they have members of their community staying," the broker said.

The riots have also forced people to eye

residential areas along National Highway number 8 in the Surat-Navsari stretch and along National Highway number 6 that leads to Bardoli and Vyara, a property dealer said.

And it is not just homes that people are looking for, they are also planning to set up businesses in areas in south Gujarat. Near Navsari, one restaurant was leased to a Jamnagar resident at Rs 30,000 a month, a real estate developer said.

Sociologists say that apart from the fear of communal trouble, people are flocking to south Gujarat as it provides avenues for economic growth and livelihood. However, sociologist Satyakam Joshi feels that even south Gujarat, which remained insulated from the riots, may not be safe in future.



A sense of helplessness seems to have gripped almost all prospective buyers..the price is not a constraint if they get a house or flat in a locality dominated by members of their own community.

Fear forces Muslim students to skip Gujarat board exams

Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: Security, not exams, seemed high on the priority list of the Gujarat authorities as well as the parents of 1.44 lakh students in Ahmedabad, Vadodara and other parts of Gujarat who appeared for their SSC and HSC exams on Thursday.

Gun-toting policemen and videographers swarmed the exam centres in Ahmedabad, but the security failed to provide any assurance to the minorities as an estimated 90 per cent of Muslim students stayed away in support of the exam-boycott call given by Muslim leaders. In Vadodara, however, Muslim students turned up in large numbers even though a boycott call had been issued.

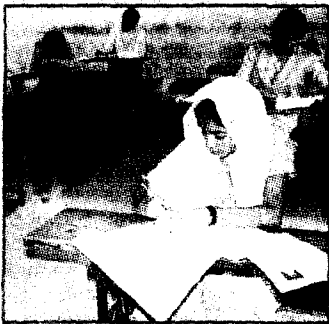
The ineptitude of the police contributed to the boycott in Ahmedabad. In the F.D. High School in Juhapura, 425 Muslim students could not go to their exam centres as the promised police protection had failed to reach the pick-up point.

"How can we send our children without police protection? The government had promised us full security, but this is what we get. Obviously, none of us will send our wards to write the exams," the principal of F.D. High School, G.M. Khan, told this newspaper. A tense situation prevailed on campus where agitated parents and students stood waiting.

Deputy commissioner of police S.M. Katara, who arrived there at 10 a.m., said that his officials had not informed him about the problem. Mr Katara intervened with the school board authorities and convinced them that the students would be allowed to write their exams late and carry on for an extra hour, but the parents rejected the offer.

In Jamalpur and other minority areas, the buses ran empty as Muslim students decided to skip the exams.

However, a large number of



George on a mission

► Defence minister George Fernandes, accompanied by minister of state (defence production) Harin Pathak, will review the situation in Gujarat during a four-day "healing mission", which began on Thursday.

Oppn unrelenting

► The opposition has decided to stay focused on Gujarat and to continue its protest in the Lok Sabha for a discussion under Rule 184 until the government concedes its demand. An all-party meeting seeking to end the stand-off in parliament has been deferred to Friday.

Centre replies to NHRC

► The National Human Rights Commission received the Centre's interim report on the Gujarat violence on Thursday. The final report will be ready by April-end.

Missions sceptical

► Belying the government's claims on the Gujarat issue, many foreign missions have expressed concern over the manner in which the situation is being handled in the state. Every mission spoken to is monitoring developments there, collecting information and interacting with NGOs. Some have despatched independent teams.

Muslim students, including those from the relief camps, reportedly ignored the boycott call and appeared for the exams. As many as 32 students from the Shah Alam relief camp turned up. "I do not believe that Muslim students should have boycotted the exams. It would be their loss," said Shireen Khan, who wrote her SSC exam at the Pranam High School in Juhapura.

Meanwhile, in an apparent bid to build up pressure on the BJP, a conclave of its allies has been planned to discuss the situation arising from the continued violence in Gujarat. This was announced by Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah in Delhi on Thursday. However, he maintained that it was not a part of any pressure tactics.

"We will be holding a conclave of all non-BJP political parties and provide a combined stand to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee," Mr Abdullah said, adding that the conclave was not aimed at a confrontation with the BJP. Such a meeting would help in better performance by the NDA, he said.

In Kolkata, Trinamul Congress leader Mamata Banerjee stepped up the 'Oust Modi' campaign and demanded the imposition of President's rule in Gujarat. She said she had not discussed the suggestion with the Telugu Desam and it was up to the Vajpayee government to accept or reject it.

Even as the non-BJP NDA allies decided to unite on the Gujarat issue, the opposition continued with its protest in the Lok Sabha for a discussion on the issue under Rule 184.

As a result, the House was adjourned for the fourth day without transacting any business.

At a meeting convened by CPM parliamentary group leader Somnath Chatterjee on Thursday, the opposition parties ruled out any climbdown on the issue and agreed to keep pressing for voting on the motion of debate.

HD-11
19/4

People's Front leaders to visit Gujarat

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 18. The People's Front today adopted a rigid posture and decided not to scale down its demand to discuss the Gujarat issue in the Lok Sabha under Rule 184.

After a meeting here, the Front leaders expressed concern at the violence in Gujarat and charged that claims by the Narendra Modi Government of having restored normality were "totally false".

They alleged that the relief camps were now being targeted. The meeting also took note that "absolutely" no steps had been taken to rehabilitate the victims, numbering more than one and a half lakhs.

"Rather plots are being distributed to MPs and MLAs at concessional rates," the Front

charged. Dissatisfied over the functioning of relief camps and the lack of rehabilitation work, the Front decided to send a delegation to the State on April 24 for a first-hand assessment.

The CPI(M) Parliamentary Party leader, Somnath Chatterjee, at whose residence the meeting was held, rejected the Government suggestion that the Opposition dilute its demand for a discussion in the Lok Sabha under a rule that did not entail voting.

The leaders were unwilling to concede the demand since admission under Rule 184, which entails voting, could show up the cracks in the National Democratic Alliance over the issue with some allies having joined the "remove Modi" chorus.

Among those who attended the meeting, held under the

chairmanship of Jyoti Basu, were the Front convener and Samajwadi Party (SP) chief, Mulyam Singh Yadav, general secretaries, Harkishan Singh Surjeet (CPI-M), A.B. Bardhan (CPI) and Debabrata Biswas (AIFB), the RSP leader, Abani Roy, the CPI(M) politburo member, Sitaram Yechury, and the SP general secretary, Amar Singh.

The Defence Minister, George Fernandes, said here that starting today he would begin a four-day visit to various parts of Gujarat. He said that he would visit Ahmedabad, Godhra, Mehsana, Baroda, Surat and Kutch to review the relief and rehabilitation work and take people from various communities with him. He would also assess how much longer the Army would be needed in the State.

HD-10
19/4

The Gujarat imbroglio

By Rajeev Dhavan

We have to turn to the President himself. Under Article 78, he has the right to call for reports and examine issues to advise, encourage and warn his own advisor, the Prime Minister.

THE EVENTS since the Sabarmati Express was attacked on February 27 surpass some of the worst nightmares India has faced since independence. We are now in the grip of an unprecedented crisis. Godhra was unforgivable. What followed is a continuing act of a shame. Now, politics feeds on communal horror. The preliminary findings shock the constitutional conscience in unequal measure — with politicians of various persuasions exposing themselves. The Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, has not quelled or controlled the situation. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, has visited Gujarat; and, is apprised of the horror. But, he does not have the political courage to sack Mr. Modi. Why? Perhaps, the BJP feels that prospects of victory in the next election in Gujarat will be enhanced by supporting the communalism associated with Mr. Modi's actions and inactions. The BJP does not want to risk losing the only major State in its political possession. Some of its allies fear the collapse of the Union Government if Gujarat backfires on the BJP-led coalition at the Centre. The Samata Party's spokesperson resigned in protest over his outfit's stance. The rest of the NDA's allies are dithering — unsure whether to hold on to office or honour the Constitution. There is a standoff.

Mr. Vajpayee refuses to sack Mr. Modi. The situation in Gujarat remains abnormal. The minorities — especially, the Muslims — have received their worst shock since Partition, akin to the senseless brutalities inflicted on the Sikhs in 1984. In Gujarat, further political mileage is expected to be made out of communal mayhem. The facts of Godhra were ghastly enough. What followed defies democratic and secular credulity. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) issued notice on March 1. Despite this, Mr. Modi's Government established a Commission of Inquiry. Legally, there was nothing wrong in doing so. The inquiry should have come from the Central Government. There can be a State and Union inquiry after the Supreme Court's judg-

ment in 1980. But, Mr. Modi's Government's inquiry was a ploy.

After J.S. Verma of the NHRC visited Gujarat (March 19-22), he found no justification for the Government not containing the continuing unprecedented violence and the Modi regime's omissions and commissions. Unfazed by this preliminary indictment, an NGO filed a case in the Gujarat High Court to stop the NHRC from further investigation! The Supreme Court stayed the proceedings in the Gujarat High Court. This meant the NHRC could continue its investigations. It has made recommendations which are being ignored. Not only was the communal situation being fanned for political reasons, but investigation into the true facts was being thwarted and stalled. It was the NHRC's finest hour. Meanwhile, the facts spoke for themselves. Mosques were destroyed. Muslims were brutally assaulted and murdered. Pamphlets were circulated on how the Muslims were to be attacked and maltreated. The State has not proceeded against their circulation. The State machinery broke down; and, by some accounts, connived in the communal horror. Mr. Vajpayee wept but, refused to act.

No one is accountable in Gujarat — politically or constitutionally. The constitutional machinery has broken down, calling for President's Rule under Article 356. But, what happens when the Union Government itself fails to act? Under Article 355 it is the duty of the Union "to protect every State against external aggression and internal disturbance". This was the Article sought to be invoked against Laloo Prasad Yadav's Bihar and Jyoti Basu's West Bengal and also Tamil Nadu when the Union wanted to send a team to investigate a constitutional breakdown. But, when a real break-

down took place in Gujarat, the Union was silent and supine. What happens when the Union does not live up to its constitutional obligations. Mr. Modi does not and cannot command the confidence of the minorities. The least that could have been done was the removal of Mr. Modi as a confidence enhancing measure. Today, the Government in Gujarat led by Mr. Modi cannot provide secular democracy for that State. We also have a politically crafty Union Government that will not act. That is why the impasse in Parliament is justified leading to a constitutional impasse.

Under normal circumstances, it is difficult to support the imposition of President's Rule. In most of the 100-odd impositions, there has been little or no justification. President's Rule was imposed on Kerala in 1959 on grounds of a breakdown of law and order when it was not justified. An anti-price rise agitation led to President's Rule in Gujarat in 1974. President's Rule followed the Akali agitation in 1983; and the Constitution was amended so that President's Rule could be imposed in Punjab from 1987 to 1990. In Tamil Nadu in 1976 and Manipur in 1979, President's Rule was imposed because the Governments were corrupt. After the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992, President's Rule was imposed in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh — wrongly so in the latter case. The Bommai case (1993) examined these impositions; and, significantly laid down that a breakdown of secularism was a valid ground to impose President's Rule.

Apply all this to Gujarat; there is a breakdown of law and order on a frightening scale. There is political corruption — in the Government's activity and inactivity. Secularism has

been tarnished. Communalism rules through terror. Gujarat is one of those cases where President's Rule should be imposed. Instead, President's Rule has been imposed on India's largest state of Uttar Pradesh even though there is a largest single party that can form a government. But, just as President's Rule in Uttar Pradesh is convenient for the BJP, not imposing it in Gujarat is expected to bring in present and future electoral dividends.

Who will impose President's Rule? The Prime Minister. But, he is not even prepared to sack Mr. Modi. He relies on his allies in Parliament to save him from an adverse vote. We have to turn to the President himself. Under Article 78, he has the right to call for reports and examine issues to advise, encourage and warn his own advisor, the Prime Minister. K. R. Narayanan warned against President's Rule in Bihar a few years ago. It is now his duty to advise imposition of President's Rule in Gujarat. Neither the Sarkaria Commission (1988) nor the Constitution Commission (2002) recommends an abolition of President's Rule. Personally, I do not like these provisions. But, in this situation, President's Rule may be justified. It is better than partial national emergency under Article 352. The only snag is that the State will still be run by the BJP through the Union Government. This is where the allies come in to ensure that President's Rule is closely monitored by them and through Parliament.

The BJP got a jolt when it was wiped out of power in several States in February 2002. The Ayodhya gambit had not paid off. What we are seeing in Gujarat and some other States is a new kind of BJP electoral politics through instrumenting a communal jihad in the name of Hindu chauvinism. This is a new electoral ploy — as despicable as the revulsion and horror it generates. One's worst fears about the BJP and its sangh parivar or social and political family seem justified. The sheer savagery of events causes dismay. Communal violence has replaced Ayodhya as the new electoral mantra.

Two-Nation Gujarat

For over a century now, these are questions that have remained at the very heart of our search for a national identity: What is India? Who is an Indian? Barring the Mahatma, who harboured a radical distrust of nationhood with its obsession with history and premium on homogeneity of cultures and languages, there have essentially been two answers given to the question. One, the Nehruvian answer which defined India as a composite entity with a syncretic history and culture ranging over 5,000 years. Two, a fundamentalist response, shared across the religious divide — in the past by the Muslim League as much as the Hindu Mahasabha, in contemporary times, by the Shahi Imam as much as the neighbourhood Sanghi. Despite the surface differences, they are united by a common assumption: That India is not one nation but two. The difference is that while a Shahi Imam believes that these two “nations” — Hindus and Muslims — must forever exist in autonomy and isolation, the sangh parivar believes that of the two, Hindus — owing to their numbers — must be accorded a pride of place in India. Further that the Muslims are not, intrinsically or definitionally, part of India, their inclusion in Bharat Mata is at the sufferance of the majority community. It is a great historical myth that this two-nation theory — which ostensibly led to the vivisection of the country — was first propounded by a rabid Muslim communalist by the name of Mohammed Ali Jinnah. In actual fact, it was a theory that long preceded Jinnah, having been expounded by such names as Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya in late 19th century Bengal and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in the early part of the 20th, among countless others.

While no serious student of Indian history will deny the shortcomings of Nehru's imagined India, it is equally obvious that his secular vision of equal citizenship for all, irrespective of faith, is far superior to anything that the fundamentalists have had to offer as a replacement. Nor is this superiority a mere theoretical one. As the events of the last month and a half in Narendra Modi's Gujarat so tragically demonstrate, any wilful deviation from secularism at the level of state policy cannot but have ruinous consequences for the future of India's polity. Not that it has deterred Mr Modi, who is determinedly implementing the same two-nation precepts that he and his party and parivar otherwise so blithely accuse the Muslims of supporting. This explains why Mr Modi's administration felt no moral obligation to protect the lives and properties of minorities after the horrifying massacre in Godhra. It also explains why it continues to feel no guilt about not making any worthwhile effort to rehabilitate victims now living in conditions of unimaginable squalor in hundreds of camps across the state. Not surprisingly, the chilling message is finally hitting home among the Muslims, many of whom are desperately pleading with their employers — in the public sector and Central government — to transfer them to safer places outside Gujarat. This shocking exodus of minorities from their home and hearth, because Mr Modi's government regards them as aliens, is the darkest manifestation of the two-nation theory since the madness of Partition fifty-five years ago. It is Atalji's rajdharma to stop it now.

Modi must go: People's Front

1871 By Our Special Correspondent 110 f

NEW DELHI, APRIL 17. The People's Front today took its 'oust Modi' campaign to the streets organising a protest march to Jantar Mantar here, even as parties constituting the Front continued the protest in Parliament.

The Front leaders said their agitation would be intensified if the demands were not met. MPs belonging to the combine, who participated in the march taken out from the Parliament House, launched a virulent attack against the BJP Government in Gujarat, demanding the immediate removal of the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, and criticising what they called the BJP's bid to advance Assembly elections in the State.

The leaders demanded effective steps to check the ongoing violence in the State and provide security, relief and rehabilitation to the minorities. Similar marches and rallies were organised elsewhere in the country.

The meeting was addressed by the Front leaders, including the CPI (M) general secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, his CPI counterpart, A.B. Bardhan, the JD (S) president, H.D. Deve Gowda, the Samajwadi Party chief and front convener, Mulayam Singh Yadav, the All-India Forward Bloc general secretary, Debabrata Biswas, all of whom said they would be in the forefront of the battle against "communal forces".

Mr. Surjeet said the people should be prepared for any sacrifice in the fight against communal forces and that the NDA allies must distance themselves from the BJP. Mr. Bardhan appealed to the Election Commission to take into consideration whether the ground condition was conducive to holding free and fair polls.

Mr. Gowda, who has visited Gujarat criticised the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, for his Goa speech and asked that if the Government felt that the riots were triggered by the Godhra incident of train burnings, then why were people behind the train carnage not exposed.

THE HINDU

This is not the time for polls in Gujarat: Naidu

By Our Special Correspondent

HYDERABAD, APRIL 17. The Telugu Desam Party sees the Gujarat Cabinet decision not to hold Assembly elections as a vindication of its stand. "We have been maintaining that this is no time to go in for the polls", the Chief Minister, N. Chandrababu Naidu, said in response to questions at a news conference here on Wednesday.

Interacting with the media on power sector reforms, Mr. Naidu reiterated the TDP's commitment to secularism and said the demand on Gujarat should be viewed from the secular and national interests involved and not in "isolation".

He did not react to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa's AIADMK "sailing with the TDP" on postponement of elections in Gujarat, saying that in a democracy every leader had the right to express his/her views.

Should an issue be allowed to stall Parliament for days on end? He said it was not uncommon for the House to be "dead-locked" over an issue for long spells.

The Chief Minister took potshots at the Pradesh Congress

and the Leader of the Opposition, Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy, for "harping" on free power for farmers when his leader, Sonia Gandhi, clearly asked the Chief Ministers of the Congress-ruled States to discourage free power. That was why the Congress had lost credibility. They promised something knowing full well it could not be fulfilled.

We are with the PM, says Mamata

By Our Special Correspondent

KOLKATA, APRIL 17. The Trinamool Congress leader, Mamata Banerjee, has decided to back the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, on the Gujarat issue.

Within 48 hours of her announcement that she would support the Telugu Desam Party's demand for the ouster of the Gujarat Chief Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, Ms. Banerjee said that her party would actually support the Vajpayee Government on the issue.

"We are aware that certain political parties are working overtime to topple the NDA Government at the Centre. We don't appreciate the move. No

one wants election now. So, we are firmly behind the Prime Minister," she said.

According to sources, Ms. Banerjee is wary of throwing her lot with the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Chandrababu Naidu, at this point because in Bengal where the ruling Marxists have pushed her to the background and at the Centre she finds herself "marginalised" because of her compulsion to work without a ministerial portfolio.

Additionally, they say she realises that Mr. Naidu will continue to rule Hyderabad even if he snaps his ties with the NDA whereas in her case, she rather stands to gain if she sticks to Mr. Vajpayee.

Ms Banerjee also thinks that Mr. Naidu has an option in the leftists-dominated People's Front which is a "no-go" area for her because of her dislike for the leftists.

The sources said that Ms. Banerjee had other calculations as well as she had just been made aware that the Prime Minister was seriously thinking of a Cabinet reshuffle in the near future and that she would be re-inducted into it.

BJP, TDP engage in war of nerves

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: Both the BJP and its key ally, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), which are locked in an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation over the dismissal of Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi, are waiting to see who blinks first.

On Tuesday, neither appeared to be in a mood to accommodate the other and further hardened their positions.

While a BJP parliamentary party meeting on Tuesday morning asserted that Mr Modi would not be removed, the TDP stood equally firm on its demand for his dismissal. In fact, the TDP took a step further in its offensive against the BJP when it joined the opposition chorus for an "immediate discussion on the Gujarat issue" in the Lok Sabha.

TDP leader K. Yerran Naidu said he had written to deputy speaker P.M. Sayeed seeking a discussion. However, unlike the opposition—which wants a discussion through an adjournment motion that requires a vote—Mr Naidu said he had left this detail to the deputy speaker's discretion.

Although the TDP has not pressed for a vote, some other NDA constituents held consultations among themselves on Tuesday and sent notices to the deputy

speaker for a debate under Rule 184, which provides for a vote. This set them on a collision course with the BJP, which decided at Tuesday's parliamentary party meeting to oppose any discussion under Rule 184.

Mr Naidu was non-committal on how the TDP would vote if the situation arose. He merely remarked, "The meaning is clear..the very fact we are demanding a full-length discussion in the house means we want to place our views on record..We are prepared for anything." TDP sources admitted that having taken this strong position, it would be difficult for the party now to retract, particularly since the Congress had launched an all-out offensive on this issue.

The TDP also sought to delink its demand for Mr Modi's removal with the possible withdrawal of its support to the NDA government. Both Mr Naidu and TDP senior leader Uma Reddy Venkateswaralu were

quick to emphasise this point, stating that their immediate demand was Mr Modi's removal. The TDP has also come out strongly against the BJP's proposal for an early poll in Gujarat, saying the first priority there is the restoration of peace and normalcy.

Pressure is now mounting on the Vajpayee government with TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu expected to arrive in the capital in the next few days. According to NDA sources, leaders of the TDP, JD(U) and Trinamul Congress are in touch on the issue. A meeting of the NDA constituents on Tuesday had to be cancelled as Trinamool leader Mamata Banerjee was out of town.

The NCP is also said to be toying with the idea of a vote on the issue.

With parliament remaining paralysed for the second consecutive day on Tuesday, opposition leaders met to discuss their next move. "It is for the allies to take a decision on an issue that is dividing the country through its middle," CPM leader Somnath Chatterjee said.

The Congress, which made the first move to take the issue out of parliament with a dharna of its MPs led by party president Sonia Gandhi at Rajghat, has decided to have a closer coordination with other oppo-

sition parties.

A fresh round of consultations among opposition leaders is likely after CPM veteran Jyoti Basu arrives here on Wednesday.

Significantly, the Left has held out an open invitation to the Congress to participate in Wednesday's People's Front agitation to press for Mr Modi's ouster. "We have made an open appeal to everybody," Mr Chatterjee said when asked about the Congress' participation.

Meanwhile, both houses of parliament were adjourned on Tuesday over the Gujarat issue. The Rajya Sabha was adjourned soon after it met in the morning as a determined opposition demanded Mr Modi's dismissal. The Lok Sabha was adjourned for the day when opposition members rushed to the well to counter slogan-shouting BJP members.

► See Edit: Katyug Rajdharna, Page 12

COALITION COURSE

- BJP opposes discussion under Rule 184, which entails voting
- TDP non-committal, leaves decision on vote to deputy speaker
- Southern ally delinks Modi's removal from support to government

GUJARAT**WHY PROSPECT OF POLLS PUTS SMILE ON MODI'S FACE**

Moribund Gujarat BJP's leap on faith

Godhra happened three days after Modi won election to Gujarat House. Before that, the party was struggling to hold on to even panchayats. **DARSHAN DESAI** on why the BJP wants an election, and fast

FOR over two years, election has been a four-letter word for the BJP in Gujarat. Not for the frequency with which elections came but because one poll after another brought shocking defeats for the party.

Today, after the Godhra carnage and the riots which followed, every BJP leader in Gujarat wants Assembly elections, and quickly. Underlying this is the strong belief that the communal divide now in place in Gujarat will override all negative factors which led to the party's defeats in the past.

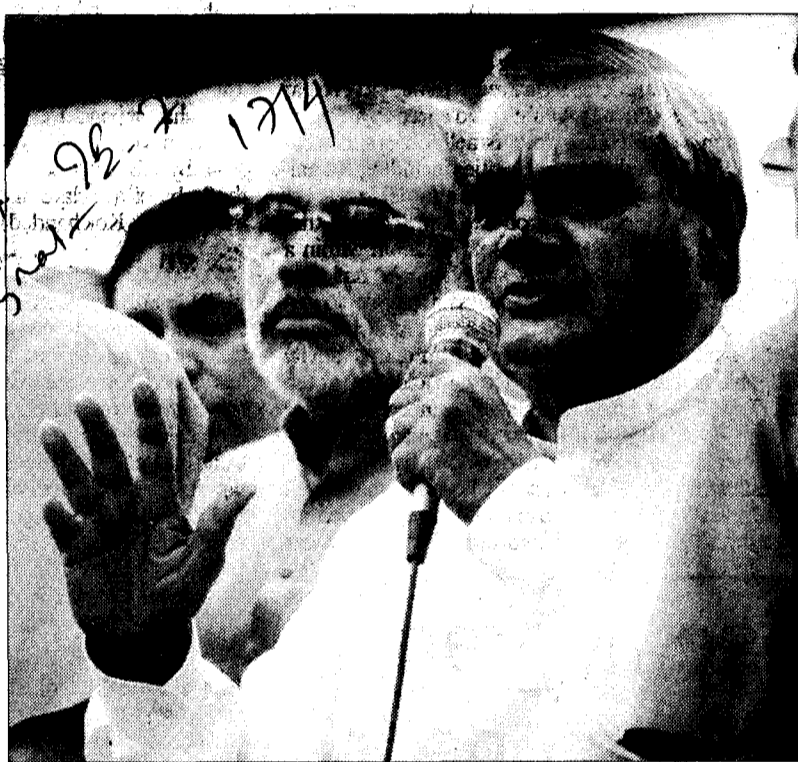
Most leaders want elections by May-end, or latest the first week of June. They fear that as time passes, the violence will start fading from public memory, but its adverse effects on the economy, business and trade will begin to manifest. Also, you cannot allow the communal fire to burn beyond a point where it turns counter-productive.

This reflects the party's lack of confidence. It may be holding the Hindutva card in its hand but the rest of the structure is sharply divided.

When the BJP first came to power in 1995, it was a unified, cohesive force. It was returned back to power in 1998, with the same two-thirds majority. But today, the same party has factions and leaders with their own agenda, and misgivings and prejudices against each other abound. It is not without reason that Chief Minister Narendra Modi had to camp in Rajkot for five days before the by-election in Rajkot-II constituency, from where he contested and won.

Rajkot is the hometown of Keshubhai Patel, whom Modi had replaced. The constituency he chose was regarded as a pocketborough of Keshubhai's lieutenant Vajubhai Vala, whom Modi had not included in his ministry. The reason cited was the stink of corruption around Vala. But BJP leaders reveal that Vala was promised a Rajya Sabha berth. Eventually, it was Keshubhai who was sent to the Rajya Sabha, and away from Gujarat.

In a party where revenge is not unknown in spite of all the tall talk of discipline, will Keshubhai take this ly-



The BJP fears that as time passes, the violence will start fading from memory, but adverse effects on the economy, business, trade will begin to manifest

ing down? Despite his open support for Modi recently when the latter returned victorious from the Goa conclave, party leaders close to Keshubhai are hinting at trouble. They are asking why Modi was let off by the high command after the party's defeat in two by-elections when Keshubhai had been ousted for a similar sin. The former chief minister belongs to the influential Patel community, without whose support no party can hope to rule Gujarat.

But the BJP's claim of a disciplined, cadre-based organisation was exposed much earlier, in 1995, in the rebellion that led to the unseating of Keshubhai by Shankersinh Vaghela. The latter had played a stellar role in catapulting the BJP into reckoning, but was sidelined.

The rebellion, however, was dismissed as the machinations of one man's ambition and the BJP came back to power in 1998 with the slogan of giving a rule free from fear, hunger and corruption. As time went by, the BJP rule came to epitomise exactly the opposite.

Corruption became a buzzword. The anti-Christian propaganda and

the communal twist to stray cases of elopements by couples belonging to different religions aroused fear among the minorities. The deprivation of people during the three years of drought and the earthquake that followed became the symbol of hunger.

Before Modi replaced Keshubhai, the BJP had suffered erosion all across the state. It had lost the Sabarmati Assembly by-election to the Congress. Sabarmati is part of Union Home Minister L.K. Advani's Gandhinagar constituency and the by-election was necessitated by the resignation of Yatin Oza, both as an MLA and a BJP member. Simultaneously, the BJP, in spite of its vociferous claims, failed to win the Sabarkantha Lok Sabha by-election.

Earlier, in late 2000, the BJP had lost most of the district and taluka panchayats elections in the state. It had also lost two major municipal corporations — Ahmedabad and Rajkot. Ahmedabad had been with the BJP for 15 years while they had held Rajkot for 25 years.

After Modi became the Chief Minister too, the BJP's losing spree continued. It was trounced in two Assembly by-elections — from Sayajiganj, in Vadodara city, and Mahuva, in the tribal belt of Surat district. The Congress won both seats, with nearly double the margin with which the BJP had won them in 1998.

Clearly, the change of guard in Gandhinagar had failed to impress the people. But then happened February 27, and the Godhra carnage — just three days after Modi won the by-election from Rajkot-II. And the BJP, desperately looking for something that could help restore its credibility, found a plan.

...as divided, visionless Cong stumbles around

When former party MP Ehsan Jaffry was calling for help, no Cong leader came for his rescue. **DARSHAN DESAI** says that's typical of the party in the state

IF NARENDRA Modi is strutting and smiling these days, you don't have to look far for a reason. Just have a glance at the glum faces in the Congress. For the past seven years, the party has been depending largely on luck in Gujarat. It had no hand in the BJP's series of electoral setbacks since 2000. And the di-

vision within its ranks plus its inertia have ensured it has been able to do little post Godhra too to put the BJP on the mat. Not even when former party MP Ehsan Jaffry, trapped by a mob in the Gulbarg Society of Ahmedabad along with many families, was making frantic telephone calls for help. No Congress leader went there. Instead, they made calls to the police, which was already paralysed. Neither did any Congress leader visit Naroda Patia, witness to the biggest post-Godhra massacre — more than 90 people were killed there.

Some may say they may have scared of the mobs. But those here would tell you the idea probably never occurred to the party leadership. It is the story of the party in the state — lack of a vision, spirit and the unity to counter the BJP's Hindutva propaganda and failure to govern.

Even in the case of Godhra, the immediate reaction of the Congress was knee-jerk. Instead of squarely condemning the train carnage and putting the BJP government on the mat for its failure to protect the lives of kar sevaks, the Congress first hinted that the rowdy behaviour of the latter was to blame. That hardly went down well with people shocked by the visuals of burnt couches and stories of survivors.

The Congress has blamed the BJP for playing votebank politics, but it was essentially doing the same thing then. They feared they would lose their Muslim voters and so remained guarded in their criticism of the Godhra incident. It was much later in the state assembly that a few of them questioned the government's failure to prevent the Godhra carnage which, according to its own claims now, was an ISI-

cum-terrorist conspiracy.

But here too, party differences squandered the little it could have gained. Even as Congress Gujarat president and former chief minister Amarsinh Chaudhary was preparing the ground to corner the BJP, CLP chief Naresh Rawal diverted the issue by calling names to BJP minister Suresh Mehta.

The Congress displayed a similar lack of perspective when the BJP high command threw its weight behind Modi, with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee making a somersault in Goa. The reaction in Congress circles could hardly be called an outrage.

But compounding the Congress's problem of lack of vision is its factionalism. There is the Ahmed Patel-Chaudhary group, the Madhavsinh Solanki faction, the Vaghela group and the Urmilaben Patel



Congress demonstration in Rajkot. Express

group. They hold divergent opinions on issues and if two of them come together on any problem confronting the state, it is only coincidental, or to promote their own interests vis-a-vis others.

It was only during the campaigning for the Rajkot-II by-election, which Modi contested, did the Congress display a semblance of unity, when all groups pooled in their efforts. Though Modi won, the Congress did give him a run for his money.

However, that was largely due to the efforts of one man, Vaghela, who finds himself sidelined in the Congress. Vaghela, who pulled out all the stops to queer the pitch for Modi, knows the BJP inside out and has the charisma, spirit and ability to put the Congress on top. Only his rivals in the party won't let him.

ALLIES UNRELENTING ON 'MODI OUSTER'

Sonia takes steps to bring Opposition leaders closer

HD-1
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By Javed M. Ansari
and K.V. Prasad

NEW DELHI, APRIL 15. Today's standoff with the Government saw the Opposition parties closing ranks. In a development bound to be watched with keen interest, the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, took the lead in reaching out to the other Opposition leaders.

Soon after the first adjournment in the Lok Sabha, Ms. Gandhi walked across to where Mulayam Singh Yadav, Deve Gowda and Somnath Chatterjee were seated and invited them for a meeting in her office. She also invited G.M. Banatwala, Raghuvansh Prasad Singh and Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi. Her gesture appeared to break the ice and even Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, who does not share a warm relationship with her, appeared overwhelmed.

Mr. Yadav, who had studiously avoided meetings convened by Ms. Gandhi, not only went for today's meeting but also took along three of his party colleagues. Ms. Gandhi deputed one of her senior leaders to request the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief, Sharad Pawar, to attend, since he had left the House by the time she decided to call the leaders for a meeting. It is said that she is not averse to breaking the ice with the NCP leader to help pave the way for greater unity among

the Opposition ranks.

Emerging from the meeting, Mr. Yadav said the entire Opposition was united on the issue, and that they would insist on a discussion inside the House on Gujarat. "It is not just a State issue; there is communal tension in the entire country. The Prime Minister has made a blatantly provocative statement in Goa. All this must be discussed in the House. We will not allow the Government to get away."

His sentiments were echoed by Mr. Chatterjee of the CPI(M), who charged the Government with adopting an "intransigent attitude and allowing the State Government to foment communal trouble". He urged the allies not to support the Government on the issue.

The Congress later claimed that the entire Opposition was united. "The Government must see the reasonableness of the demand and concede to a discussion on the issue," the party spokesperson, Jaipal Reddy, said.

Some of the Government's allies also showed signs of coming together. Today, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), the Janata Dal (United) and the Samata Party held informal consultations. The JD(U) leader, Devendra Prasad Yadav, and the Samata leader, Prabhunath Singh, met the TDP Parliamentary Party leader, K. Yerran Naidu. Though the exercise was of a preliminary

nature, it is expected to gather momentum in the next few days once the Trinamool Congress leader, Mamata Banerjee, and others return to the capital. There is also talk of the TDP chief, Chandrababu Naidu, coming here for consultations with allies.

A section of the JD(U) and the Samata Party are upset with the stand taken by their parties. Devendra Yadav, who had demanded the removal of the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, has found support within the party.

In fact, when Mr. Chandrababu Naidu spoke to the JD(U) president, Sharad Yadav, on Sunday, to ascertain his party's stand, the latter is understood to have said that the Gujarat issue would be placed before its Parliamentary Board and that he would also have to discuss it with five Samajwadi Party rebels who were now with him.

Meanwhile, the BJP today accused the Opposition of being unconcerned over the budget and discussions related to the demands for grants for various Central Ministries. The party spokesman, Vijay Kumar Malhotra, said that instead of debating the budget and financial matters, the Opposition was trying to utilise the session to decide the fate of a Chief Minister. The Gujarat issue had already been discussed before the House had gone into recess.

Modi primes pitch for polls

Times News Network

GANDHINAGAR: Buoyed by the BJP's call to seek a fresh mandate of the people, Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi on Sunday put his party into poll mode on his return to the state. He has already begun addressing rallies and sent his ministers to various districts to "begin campaigning".

Soon after reaching the capital on Saturday night, he addressed a large gathering along with former chief minister Keshubhai Patel.

Mr Modi was more a suave politician than an angry pracharak as he walked up to the people lined up along the path at the VHP-run relief camp in Kankaria, where he addressed a rally on

Sunday. He accepted their greetings with folded hands, signalling to the party workers that the elections were round the corner.

Mr Modi also distributed cheques to some of the riot victims as part of the rehabilitation package announced by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee during his visit on April 4 and appealed to the inmates of the camp to maintain peace and order even

after they returned to their homes.

Perhaps, Mr Modi had done his homework even before he descended here as the chief minister made use of the Ambedkar Jayanti to address a gathering of 2,000 Dalit activists, telling them that he would not have entered politics but for the inspiration provided by

Dr Ambedkar. Mr Modi also released a book on Ambedkar. "The government will protect the fundamental rights of the people as mentioned in the Constitution framed by Dr Ambedkar," he said.

He also went to the state assembly building and garlanded the life-size statue of Dr Ambedkar. He was accompanied by other ministers, including social empowerment minister Fakirbhai

Waghela. A senior state government official, who accompanied Mr Modi at various functions, said, "The election campaign has commenced even before a formal announcement by the BJP or the government."

Mr Modi also directed his cabinet colleagues not to "sit in Gandhinagar and speculate about elections", but to reach out to the people immediately.



Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi (centre) is greeted with a lotus upon arrival in Ahmedabad on Saturday night.

In Gujarat, safety hinges on the razor's edge

By Harit Mehta and Sajid Shaikh
Times News Network

AHMEDABAD/VADODARA: Well-known sociologist Vidyut Joshi was returning to Ahmedabad from Udaipur in his car on February 28, a day after the Godhra train massacre, when roving mobs stopped him near Himmatnagar, eyed his French beard and asked for his identity. Even when he gave his name, the crowd wasn't convinced and asked him for proof. He then showed them his income tax PAN card after which he was allowed to drive ahead.

Mr Joshi says he is often mistaken for a Muslim because of his beard, but hasn't thought of shaving it off. "This is after all a part of my identity," says Mr Joshi, who lives in Surat.

But it is not so with many other people in Ahmedabad and Vadodara, the cities which have been worst-affected by the riots. People are queuing up before barber shops to shave off their beards—members of the majority community seeking to avoid being mistaken for those from the minority, even as the latter try to camouflage their identities in a surcharged atmosphere. It appears to be a throwback to Delhi in 1984 when many Sikhs there were forced to get hair-cuts

to escape mob fury. In Gujarat today, a beard is beginning to be looked upon as a security risk.

When Ahmedabad-based documentary filmmaker Stalin K. decided to return to the city from Kutch a few weeks ago, he was advised to shave off his beard. He did so reluctantly.

Or take the case of Ashish Vashi, who works with a Gujarati television channel. Mr Vashi was in Hyderabad when the disturbances here peaked. "From the time I got down from the train and reached home, at least ten people insisted that I should remove my beard," he says.

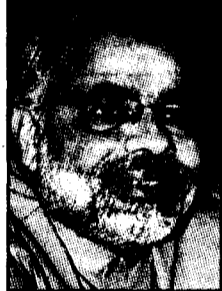
For Haji Abbas, an octogenarian staying in Juhapura, a beard was a fond memory of his Haj pilgrimage. But last week, Mr Abbas shaved it. "I must admit that I am very scared and don't want to take any chances," he says.

Adds S. Ahmed, an executive who lives in a rented apartment in Mughalwada in Vadodara, "After 15 years of sporting a

beard, I am clean-shaven. But I fear being targeted. I have a family to take care of. Only Narendra Modi can feel safe with a beard in Gujarat these days."

A lot of barber saloons confirmed that numerous people had opted for a clean shave. "I had ten customers last Friday itself.

CUT ABOVE REST



Narendra Modi

The will is lacking

Gujarat violence continues regardless

It is more than seven weeks since Gujarat began to burn in the fire of communal violence and yet the flames have not been doused. Narendra Modi has been told by the Prime Minister that the violence has to stop, but each day there are reports of more atrocities. Modi says these are sporadic incidents, and argues that violence was contained within 72 hours. His tall claims are belied by the poison spreading to areas till now untouched. The earthquake-ravaged district of Kutch on the western border was kept quiet during the worst days of the genocide by a strong and determined administration. A young police officer Vivek Srivastava, Superintendent of Police for Kutch, had controlled the situation by arresting VHP and Shiv Sena leaders who were inciting trouble and thus preempted further damage. Srivastava was "rewarded" for doing his job by a transfer order. The message was clear and revolting. As soon as Srivastava was transferred and VHP leaders let loose, Kutch went up in flames. The link is too obvious to be missed.

If the police wish to control any situation they can. In some places in Gujarat obviously the will was conspicuously lacking. More than ever before, the police have come under heavy criticism for their complicity in the massacres. There are credible reports of policemen standing by and watching as VHP goons burn, loot and kill and there are visuals of some police actively participating in the mayhem. BJP ministers planted themselves in police control rooms, directing mobs where to attack. The widow of former MP Ehsan Jafri who was burnt alive outside his home has said how her husband made over 200 calls for help to top police officials and politicians, all in vain. The National Human Rights Commission has indicted the state police for waiting for orders from politicians. Don't the guardians of the law have any respect for the uniform they wear or have they sold out completely to the political bosses?

Srivastava was not the only officer who dared to defy the diktats of politicians and tried valiantly to do his duty. Most of those few who dared to do so were similarly "rewarded". Modi did worse. He decided on promotions and transfers. Twenty-seven senior police officers were transferred punitively three weeks into the violence. The Chief Minister justified the action saying they were routine promotions. Was the time appropriate for routine tasks? More recently when additional commissioner of police Shivanand Jha was trying to do his duty by saving journalists from being lathicharged by others in the force at Sabarmati Ashram, Modi has transferred him too obviously for doing his job well. This shall not pass, Mr Modi!

SAMATA DOES A 'U-TURN'

People's Front for ouster of Modi

9-87
Original

by K.V. Prasad

NEW DELHI, APRIL 9. The People's Front today decided to intensify its campaign for the removal of the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, and even as two more constituents of the National Democratic Alliance at the Centre — the Janata Dal (United) and the Lok Janshakti Party — joined the chorus, the Samata Party did a neat U-turn.

The Front, consisting of the Left parties, the Samajwadi Party and the Janata Dal (Secular), will hold a protest rally on April 17 in Jantar Mantar here, demanding Mr. Modi's ouster. It will also call for firm steps to end the continuing violence in the State and demand action against the culprits responsible for the recent riots. And it will urge the Centre to ensure that the recommendations of the National Human Rights Commission on investigation and trial are immediately implemented. Similar protest rallies are proposed in all the district

headquarters in Uttar Pradesh and elsewhere in the country.

On the other hand, the Samata Party, which had, through its spokesman, Shambu Shrivastwa, asked for Mr. Modi's removal on Sunday, made an about turn. Its president, V. V. Krishna Rao, said in a statement that the peaceful conduct of panchayat polls in the State recently indicated that normality was gradually returning and that violence, which has been rocking Gujarat for over a month, was under control.

"It (the Samata) does not believe that a change of leadership in Gujarat is the answer to heated emotions. Strong Government machinery, acting without fear or favour to ensure that each and every citizen is protected, rehabilitated and reassured of justice is the need of the hour... no individual or community can be made scapegoats for short-term politics," he said.

This abrupt reversal is understood to have come about after

some arm-twisting by the BJP — the Samata leader and Defence Minister, George Fernandes, is said to have yielded to pressure from the establishment.

The JD (U) and the Lok Janshakti demanded the dismissal of the Modi Government and the imposition of Central rule. The JD (U) spokesman, Mohan Prakash, said the continuing violence showed that "lumpen elements" had taken control of the State and expressed the apprehension that the impact of the events in Gujarat would not be limited to any party or the State but the whole country.

Making a similar demand, the Lok Janshakti Party spokesman, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, said Gujarat "continues to burn as the Narendra Modi Government looks the other way." The party alleged that the condition of relief camps was pathetic and that the minority community was not being provided adequate relief material. It also demanded a CBI probe into the violence and said the culprits who had taken

part in the riots should be booked under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Meanwhile, in a joint statement, the Front leaders said instead of dealing firmly with the "rampaging gangs," the Gujarat administration had, "in a shocking manner, connived with their criminal activities."

"The Constitution has been trampled upon and the State administration is totally biased against citizens who belong to the minority community. The Vajpayee Government has done nothing to check this brazen violation of the Constitution and the rule of law, and the BJP defends the indefensible role of the Chief Minister," the joint statement issued by the Front chairman, Jyoti Basu, the convener, Mulayam Singh Yadav (SP), the general secretaries, Harkishan Singh Surjeet (CPI-M), A. B. Bardhan (CPI), Debrata Biswas (AIFB) and K. Panikajakshan (RSP), and the former Prime Ministers, H. D. Deve Gowda (JD-S), and V. P. Singh, said.

GEORGE UNDER BJP PRESSURE; SPOKESMAN QUILTS

Samata U-turn on Modi ouster

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 9. — Two days after demanding Mr Narendra Modi's resignation, the Samata Party did a complete U-turn on the issue today.

Mr George Fernandes buckled under pressure from the BJP and made party president Mr VV Krishna Rao issue a statement defending Mr Modi. This spelt trouble for the Samata. Party general secretary and spokesman Mr Sambhu Sharan Srivastava resigned for not being consulted on the statement.

Mr Krishna Rao's statement "welcomed prompt action taken by the chief minister to set up an inquiry and punish those responsible (for the riots)". A leadership change would not help the situation, it said.

Mr Srivastava's letter, faxed from Patna, said: "Your statement defending Mr Modi has made my position absolutely untenable. Both of us were in Delhi before I left for Patna. But you never mentioned anything about the issue to me... I do not know what transpired after my departure from Delhi. Heavens would not have fallen if you had waited for my arrival here and consulted me. Yesterday I had talks with Mr Fernandes ... in your presence. He also did not mention anything."

On Sunday, Mr Srivastava had said: "Enough is enough. The BJP should remove Mr Modi to restore confidence among people of Gujarat." It is believed that his statement had Mr Fernandes' endorsement and was meant to help Mr Vajpayee in some way, if he intended to remove Mr Modi.

Mr Jana Krishnamurthy and senior Cabinet ministers had a discussion with Mr Fernandes on Gujarat and the situation arising out of Mr Srivastava's "damaging" statement, sources said. Senior Sangh Parivar leaders also spoke to him. Mr Fernandes was convinced such statements coming from his party would not do well for the coalition's image.

Mr Krishna Rao was asked to issue the statement "highlighting the positive aspects of the Gujarat government", sources said. He reportedly contended that the spokesman should be consulted before issuing a statement contradicting the party stand, but the suggestion was rejected.

The Samata and BJP statements on the Modi government's achievements are identical. "The party welcomes gradual return of normalcy and peaceful conduct of panchayat polls in Gujarat. This indicates that the extreme emotions and violence that rocked the state are under control. It does not believe change in leadership in the state is the solution...."

The BJP has ruled out any change in leadership and refuted speculations about Mr Modi's replacement after the national executive meeting in Goa.

The Lok Janshakti, another NDA ally, has demanded Mr Modi's removal and imposition of President's rule in the state.

The National Commission for Minorities today asked Gujarat to appoint a sitting judge of the Supreme Court to head the commission on riots and suggested a 10-point formula to restore normalcy.

On page 6: Modi stays; Jana; Cong in oust-Modi race

THE STATESMAN

Gujarat casts gloom on PM's foreign jaunt...

RITU SARIN
SINGAPORE, APRIL 8

PRIME Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee landed at Changi airport in an Air India Jumbo 747, but the plane was too large to land at the Pochentong airport at Phnom Penh. An Indian Airlines Airbus 320 was therefore requisitioned to take the PM and his party from Singapore to Phnom Penh, while the Jumbo waited to pick them up from Bangkok for the return flight to New Delhi.

So why couldn't the PM fly out in the Airbus 320? His aides say the plane was too small to carry his entourage and cargo, which includes paraphernalia of a mini-PMO. The PM's entourage, incidentally, includes his physician, his physiotherapist, a paramedic and five attendants, besides a host of secretaries, aides and security staff.

While sampling the buffet

TV crews in Ahmedabad. The mood at the table, where senior MEA and PMO officials were seated, turned sombre and surprisingly, the attack on Narendra Modi quite virulent. PMO officials, let down their guards and admitted that Modi, even in his meetings with the PM had been obstinate and obstinate.

The consensus: the sooner Modi went the better for the country. The PM, one of his aides said, was watching news of the attack on scribes in his Shangri La suite. Disinvestment Minister, Arun Shourie, was by his side for counsel.

An MEA advance party had visited Singapore earlier to tie up every detail of arrangements made for the media including a handout informing scribes that special arrangements had been made for "late night shopping at Mustafa, Singapore's must-visit shopping center" located in a locality called Little India.

The store was kept open for the VVIP delegation an hour beyond its regular shutters down time with the MEA officials satisfied that an important item on the media's itinerary had been ticked off on Day One. Besides the scribes, MEA and PMO's officials also visited Mustafa's aisles during the exclusive shopping hour.

The Prime Minister's arrival in Singapore, despite his visit being called off twice, got insipid coverage in the press. The *International Herald Tribune*, printed in Singapore, blanked out his arrival, while *Straits Times*, Singapore's largest selling English daily, ran a small item on their inside pages.

The papers had earlier carried a pre-visit story expecting nothing substantial from the visit, since the only agreements were one on telecom and the other on a loan of antiques. The business conferences, held on the eve of his visit, were also an attempt to garner elusive invest-

ments from Singapore, which have been flowing and flying into mainland China.

For the Indian media, the focus remained fixed on Gujarat, with the PM's aides being pressed for getting him to react on the media melee. That reaction came on Monday morning, when the PM was addressing the Indian community.

The PM's quip about the unreliability of leaders on the flight to Singapore, was followed by a similar remark, this time made by George Yeo, Singapore's Minister for Trade and Industry.

While debriefing the media along with Arun Shourie on the talks of the two Prime Ministers, it was noted that Vajpayee wanted the study paper on possible investment opportunities to be ready in a year. The Minister said that Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong had, half in jest, told Vajpayee: "I know you will be there by that time."



Vajpayee with his Singapore counterpart Goh Chok Tong in Singapore on Monday. PTI photo

Shangri La, the PM's press advisor Ashok Tandon was informed of the skirmish of the Gujarat police with

Probe into Sabarmati assault

Statesman News Service

GANDHINAGAR, April 8. — Even as the Gujarat government ordered a judicial inquiry into yesterday's police assault on journalists at Sabarmati Ashram, cases were registered against two BJP leaders and a police officer.

Ahmedabad assistant commissioner Mr TM Mehta, meanwhile, started another probe into the incident. The judicial commission will be headed by a retired High Court judge Mr SD Dave. It has been asked to submit report in three weeks.

Of the two cases registered at Sabarmati police station, one is against Mr Amit Thakkar, BJP Yuva Morcha president, and Mr Amit Shah, BJP corporator. The case was filed by deputy commissioner Mr VM Parghi. While Mr Thakkar is being treated at a hospital, Mr Shah's whereabouts are not known. Mr Thakkar was unrepentant for his role. "I did the right thing," he told this correspondent.

The second case was filed against Mr Parghi by *Aaj Tak* correspondent Dhimant Purohit, who has suffered a frac-

ture in his hand. No one was arrested till tonight.

(In Singapore, the Prime Minister mentioned the incident, though officials were shy of referring to it, SNS adds. "Journalists themselves have become the news," he said at a meeting of the Indian community. The incident was sad, he said, but "we've to overcome our difficulties".)

Ms Medha Patkar, whose presence at the ashram kicked up the trouble, has been escorted to Mumbai.

Two officers, Mr Parghi and Mr Shivanand Jha (additional commissioner), who have been transferred following the violence handed over their charge today. Mr Jha has been appointed DIG of armed unit (Rajkot) Mr Parghi commandant of SRP, Group Eight, Gondal.

Journalists regretted the transfer of Mr Jha who they said had stopped the lathicharge against them. Discontent is brewing among IPS officers, too, over the transfers.

Reacting to the transfer, Mr Jha said: "My lips are sealed. I'm a government officer and I've to respect the government order." He said he arrived on the scene late and found mobs "baying for Medha's blood". Sabarmati residents today protested against Mr Mehra's suspension.

THE STATESMAN

TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2002

INCREASING INTOLERANCE

THE SURGE OF intolerance and lawlessness sweeping across Gujarat since the Godhra massacre, even as a defiant Narendra Modi regime has remained negligent of its basic constitutional responsibilities, has touched new heights, with the hallowed Sabarmati Gandhi Ashram witnessing mob raids and police action on Sunday that has left at least a dozen media personnel on duty injured. It was shameful enough that the State — which was the birthplace of the apostle of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi — has been seeing for the past five weeks and more an unrelenting spiral of communal violence, which has at the last count taken a toll of over 700 and turned about one lakh people — most of them belonging to the Muslim community — into “refugees in their own land”, as evocatively put by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee. Now, the fact that the precincts of the very institution that quintessentially represented the entire gamut of noble values that Gandhiji stood for — and which has all along remained a haven of peace and brotherhood — has been ‘desecrated’ by a hate mob has inevitably heightened the sense of shame the mindless orgy of communal violence in the State has brought upon the nation.

Apparently, the presence of Medha Patkar, whose ceaseless campaign against the Sardar Sarovar Dam has engendered an anti-Gujarat image, at the ‘peace meeting’ in the Sabarmati Ashram was what the saffronites-dominated crowd was protesting. A laudable and much-needed initiative by a band of Sarvodaya activists and well-meaning individuals, the meeting was, by all accounts, an informal affair and, as such, the question whether Ms. Patkar was there by ‘invitation’ is hardly relevant. That her participation should have evoked a palpably aggressive protest is in itself a measure of the intolerance

which has come to increasingly permeate civil society because of motivated divisive campaigns of various denominations. In any case, to set the whole episode in the Narmada dam context and dismiss it as nothing but a Ms. Patkar-specific protest is to take a myopic view of the event. It has necessarily to be seen against the backdrop of the media reports speaking of systematic attempts by the hate campaigners to scuttle all peace initiatives through not-so-subtle intimidatory pressures.

No less reprehensible was the police personnel’s highhanded action against the journalists present at the Ashram, the electronic media coming in for a particularly harsh treatment, for obvious reasons. Of late, the political class, particularly that segment which happens to be in power, has grown intolerant of press criticism and, by extension, has tended to accuse it of ‘irresponsibility’ whenever the ruling establishment finds the ground reality as reflected in the media scrutiny discomfiting and embarrassing. And Mr. Modi is no exception; he blamed the media for fanning the riots in Gujarat, before coming up with his profound thesis that normality would return once the Parliament session ended! Such open denunciation — and sometimes intimidation — of the media by the powers that be, apart from undermining the democratic right to freedom of speech and expression, also inevitably translates into excesses at the cutting edge level, as it happened in the Ashram. In a way, the Sabarmati episode — the highhanded action by the police against the mediapersons together with the planned disruption of the peace initiative, even as the uniformed men were watching — amounts to belittling Mr. Vajpayee’s exhortation to the Modi administration to uphold Raj Dharma.

Modi's Muzzlemen

It is in the nature of state-sponsored violence that along with countless helpless victims, it also targets institutions that are considered part of the systemic check and balance. The unfortunate thing about the press is that while it is a vital, indeed a dramatically visible, part of this systemic course correction, it is entirely vulnerable to attack unlike the other pillars of democracy, such as the judiciary and the legislature. Which is why when the media protests an attack on its members, as it has done following Sunday's unprovoked lathicharge on journalists in Ahmedabad, it becomes more than an act of self-interest. A fettered and fearful media is the first step towards fascism. And for this reason alone, the press needs to be ready to remonstrate, and more importantly, ready and prepared for assaults on its freedom and integrity. If the police in Narendra Modi's anarchist Gujarat set upon a peaceful assemblage of journalists and sent many of them to hospital, that must be treated as part of the script penned by Mr Modi, considering the media's role in exposing the unspeakable excesses of his government. Take this very incident. An FIR filed by the offending policemen accuses the journalists of illegally assembling at the Gandhi Ashram and obstructing the former from doing their duty. In truth, the print and TV journalists had lawfully gathered at the ashram to report on a peace meeting. It was hardly their fault, then, that when the same meeting was disrupted by a mob led by a BJP youth leader, they chose to record the violence rather than shut their notebooks and cameras.

For doing their duty, then, the journalists were not only soundly thrashed but a counter-complaint lodged against them, and by policemen bound by oath to protect citizens. It turns out further that the only police officer who intervened to save the journalists, thus acting according to law, has been transferred out. If all this sounds bizarre, there is simply no help for it because lawlessness has become the norm in Modi's Gujarat. Who can explain the perversity of these actions to a chief minister and his policemen, who, in a month of unceasing violence, have demonstrated that they are a law unto themselves? But why blame only the Gujarat chief minister? Mr Modi's belated apology over Sunday's assault notwithstanding, there has been a barrage of criticism from BJP leaders concerning the media coverage of the riots. A mere two days ago, home minister L K Advani lamented the indiscretions of the press, including most notably, its refusal to stick to the tradition of not naming communities. All we can say is: Hats off to the courage of the press, which for once named names instead of hiding behind the safety that anonymity so easily provides. As a man who suffered the consequences of censorship during Indira Gandhi's infamous emergency, Mr Advani should have known better than to want to restrain the press. Back then Indira lost an election because she muzzled newspapers that tried to tell her the truth. Today, if this country looks resilient despite the savage attack on its fundamental character, surely we have the media to thank for it. And we are certain that Atal Behari Vajpayee, who is on a 'sell-India' mission abroad, will agree with us.

Sabarmati meeting abandoned after attack on Patkar

Mob defiles ashram

FROM OUR
CORRESPONDENT

Ahmedabad, April 7: Such is Gujarat today that a peace meeting cannot be held even in Gandhi Ashram.

Set up by the Mahatma in 1917, the Sabarmati Ashram was to host a meeting organised by dancer Mallika Sarabhai. But the plan had to be abandoned after a mob, this time organised not by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, but by leaders of the BJP and the Congress, descended on it, protesting against the participation of environment activist Medha Patkar.

As the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) leader arrived around 12.30 pm, a mob turned up from nowhere, barged into the hall where the meeting was going on and, shouting slogans against the "enemy of Gujarat", demanded that Patkar be thrown out and sent to Sabarmati jail, eyewitness Chunni Vaidya said.

Sarabhai pleaded with the group, led by BJP youth wing chief Amit Thakkar, Youth Congress leader Hemant Chauhan and Congress corporator Ram-bai Patel, not to disrupt the meet-

ing, promising that she would ask Patkar to leave.

"I told this group that this is much too important a meeting to be hijacked by the NBA. We are discussing a very important issue: how to bring peace. But they were undeterred and started manhandling her," Sarabhai said.

"After denying us water, she has come to bring peace," Thakkar screamed, referring to NBA's opposition to the Narmada dam, as he moved towards Patkar and grabbed her by the shoulder.

After asking Patkar to go away, Sarabhai left the venue and the meeting was called off. "I do not know what happened after that," she added. Patkar tried to explain to the mob that she was prepared to leave, but they should allow the meeting — of mostly NGO representatives and Gandhians — to go on. But the crowd did not listen.

Other peace activists had to form a human chain to protect Patkar, who had to stay locked inside a room for more than an hour. The mob did not disperse despite requests from police, who had to use force to push it away and escort Patkar out.

In the process, 12 journalists were injured and this — rather than the forced cancellation of the peace meeting — became the focus of protests.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi condemned the "unprovoked and diabolical" police attack on journalists and violation of the sanctity of the ashram, blaming the "autocratic" Gujarat government for the incident. There was complete silence on the presence of Congress leaders in the mob that disrupted the peace meeting.

Chief minister Narendra Modi, too, referred only to the assault on journalists, describing it as "very sad and distasteful". Later, the Gujarat government denied there had been any such attack, but still transferred two IPS officers, suspended an inspector and ordered a judicial probe into the incident. It said some journalists were injured while the police were trying to rescue Patkar.

Gandhian Prakash Shah said that Patkar's presence was merely a pretext to create a disturbance and that the meeting would have been disrupted even if she was not there. "There are

some people, including Congressmen, as we saw today, who do not want peace in the state. They have been threatening the ashram secretary," he added.

Anticipating trouble, the ashram secretary had sought police protection yesterday after he received threat calls for allowing NGOs to meet on the premises.

Along with his associates, Hemant Chauhan, who lives in the ashram itself, had pressured authorities of the Gujarat Vidyapeeth to decline permission to Sarabhai, who had intended to hold the meeting there first but was forced to change the venue to the ashram.

Two meetings — one called by the Sarvodaya Mandal and the other by Sarabhai — were to be held in the ashram today. But no one, including ashram secretary Amrut Modi, had any idea that Patkar would attend.

Sarabhai said she had not invited Patkar who had decided to come on her own, but added that the meeting was open to anyone wishing to participate. But a Mumbai-based member of the NBA, Vijaya Chauhan, said Patkar had received an e-mail asking her to attend the meeting.

Gujarat govt must balance police force: minorities panel

By Akshaya Mukul
Times News Network

NEW DELHI: Straight talk and quotes from Shakespeare dominated Saturday's three-hour deliberations between the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) and top government officials of Gujarat.

NCM chairperson Justice Mohammad Shamim quoted Shakespeare while referring to the plight of the minorities in Gujarat. "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods, they kill us for their sport," he said, according to a source. At another point, he commented, "If Gujarat is not controlled, it will lead to a national holocaust."

Justice Shamim was also upset that chief minister Narendra Modi had not bothered to acknowledge the commission's letter. The questions posed by the commission's vice-chairperson,

Tarlochan Singh, to the officials were: "How come even after 36 days there is a complete breakdown of law and order? Why did the state fail? What happened to the steel frame of bureaucracy?"

The officials gave a long-winded explanation on the pattern of

How come the victims introduced to the Prime Minister were different from the ones we met? What happened to those we met?"

As there was no reply, Mr Singh asked whether the officials remained silent spectators because of official pressure. "Tell us on oath what really happened?" Mr Singh asked again. The officials denied working under any pressure.

In a clear message that the Gujarat police had failed in its duty, the commission has asked the state government to balance the composition of the police force working in sensitive areas. "The police team should consist of people from different minority communities. In case the officers from the minority communities are not available, the state can borrow them from other states on deputation," said Justice Shamim.

FEARS AND SUGGESTIONS

- If Gujarat is not controlled, it will lead to a national holocaust, says Justice Mohammad Shamim
- Modi's justification of Ahmedabad violence as a reaction to the Godhra incident comes up for discussion

violence, explaining how normalcy had been restored in sensitive areas. The stock response was: "Serious attempts are being made to control the situation." Mr Singh continued the queries. "We were the first to reach the state and visit the Shah-e-Alam relief camp.

Stray incidents in Gujarat

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, APRIL 5. A day after the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's peace mission to riot-torn Gujarat, the scale of violence showed considerable decline today.

The normality was marred late in the evening with two incidents of stabbing in Kalupur and Vatva localities. Both the injured have been admitted to hospital where the condition of one was stated to be critical.

An indefinite curfew was clamped in Lunawada town in

the tribal-dominated Panchamahals district following incidents of arson and stone-throwing. The trouble sparked off from a scuffle between the drivers of an autorickshaw and a tractor, belonging to rival communities, over a minor accident. Soon, the people from the two communities joined the fray and indulged in heavy stone-throwing. At least three shops and cabins were set on fire, forcing the police to impose indefinite curfew. One person was killed in police firing

in violence in Modasa town in north Gujarat on Thursday despite the indefinite curfew.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, held a high-power committee meeting of officials today for the implementation of the relief and rehabilitation package announced by the Prime Minister on Thursday.

A Government spokesman said steps were being taken to implement the package at the earliest to improve the conditions of the riot-hit people in the State.

THE HINDU

Modi survives with A tal slap

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9-8-64 - Gujarat

Face to face with 'real culprit'

FROM BASANT RAWAT

This man is the real culprit. He got our people killed.

A wailing riot victim pointed at chief minister Narendra Modi who had accompanied Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Shah-e-Alam Dargah, the biggest relief camp in Ahmedabad.

Modi stood in stony silence. Protocol had brought him to the camp, where he had not dared to venture in more than a month since the riots erupted. Vajpayee was visiting the dargah on Thursday and, as chief minister, Modi had to be present.

Nanumia Malek broke down as he named Modi the "real culprit". In a voice choked with tears, Nanumia told the Prime Minister that he lost six members of his family through the police post was a stone's throw away from his house. "When we asked the police to protect us, we were told we will have to die. No one can save us," he sobbed, pointing out that the duo that led the mob, MLA Mayaben Kodhani and VHP leader Jaydeep Patel, were still free.

The chief minister was greeted by slogan-shouting riot victims when he arrived at the dargah. As Vajpayee completed his 15-minute speech, anger bottled up for over a month in which no senior BJP leader had cared to visit, spilled



AB Vajpayee, accompanied by Narendra Modi and Uma Bharti, listens to the plight of a riot victim at a relief camp. (Reuters)

over. "Narendra Modi *murda abad*", "Narendra Modi, *hai hai*", people cried out, forcing camp organisers to intervene and pacify them. They too, were surprised by Modi's visit.

Outside the camp, where a large crowd had gathered, slogans continued to be shouted, describing Modi as "chad" and "murderer". Some protesters carried placards denouncing the chief minister. Ten riot victims met the

Prime Minister to recount their spine-chilling experiences.

Fatima, from Naroda Pattia like most others at the camp, said a mob dragged out her pregnant cousin, slit her stomach to wrench out the foetus and then flung both into a fire. Ten-year-old Raja Qureshi, whose entire family was killed, just cried and cried.

In the past 35 days, several fact-finding teams and leaders from various political parties,

barring the ruling BJP, have visited the camp that houses about 8,000 victims.

"But they (the victims) never cried like this before. Yes, they did cry, but only after they had narrated the incident that brought them to the relief camp," said Saffihal Memon, in-charge of the camp. Today — the first time a senior BJP leader visited the camp in all these days — tears flowed freely.

Even the Prime Minister was

affected. Wiping away tears, he promised Raja he would do something for the boy. But Modi appeared unmoved.

Niamuddin Iqbal Sheikh, who lost five family members in the riots, urged the Prime Minister to ensure that policemen visit the camp to register riot-related FIRs because residents did not feel safe going to the police station.

The dargah camp relief committee submitted a memo-

My one message to the chief minister is that he should follow *raj dharma*. These are very meaningful words. A ruler should not make any discrimination between his subjects on the basis of caste, creed and religion

— VAJPAYEE

This man (Modi) is the real culprit. He got our people killed

— A RIOT VICTIM

to Vajpayee

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Ahmedabad, April 4: His anguish punctuated by flashes of anger Atal Bihari Vajpayee said all the words of healing the wounded of Gujarat wanted to hear from the Prime Minister, barring one.

"My one message to the chief minister is that he should follow *raj dharma* (ethics of governance)," Vajpayee said, debrising from Godhra to Ahmedabad.

"Sir, that's what I am practising," chief minister Narendra Modi piped in, but the Prime Minister cut him short: "I am sure Narenbhai is doing it."

But what followed was music to Modi's ears. Asked whether there would be a change of leadership in the state, Vajpayee said he does not foresee any such possibility. But the Prime Minister also discounted the chances of a snap poll in the state — something Modi was keen on.

Similar balancing acts were in evidence during Vajpayee's visit, the overriding theme of which was an unequivocal — and repeated — condemnation of the carnage and impassioned appeals for tolerance.

The Prime Minister's team itself reflected the conflicting pulls and pressures under which he was working. He landed in Gujarat accompanied by Hindutva hardliner Uma Bharti and the minority-friendly face of the BJP, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi. But Naqvi, who enjoys little support among his community and whose presence stoked tensions in one of the relief camps, was completely overshadowed by Bharti.

But the Prime Minister did not mince words while promising protection to the minority community. "The majority (community) is capable of safeguarding its interests. It has number

on its side. It is only the minority which needs protection," he said in reply to a question at the airport on his way back.

Vajpayee said what happened in Godhra should be condemned but events after that should also be condemned. "They are more shameful," he said in what was the first such unqualified condemnation by any BJP leader.

He said the Godhra train carnage "does not look like a spontaneous attack. There must have been some planning. It is a serious matter but certainly not a majority-minority issue."

The Prime Minister asserted more than once that it was the responsibility of the political leadership and officials to end violence, which again flared up in the state, killing one. Vajpayee also announced a relief package.

"*Amam kayam rakhma rajinethik neta gur adhikarion ki zimnawari hai*," Vajpayee told the 8,000-odd residents of Ahmedabad's biggest relief camp, Shah-e-Alam Dargah. He visited the site of the Godhra carnage and toured relief camps, offering the victims words of comfort and vowing to punish the guilty.

Due to leave on a tour of Southeast Asian nations, Vajpayee said: "With what face, I do not know, I will go abroad after what all has happened here."

"I have come to tell you that you are not alone in this hour of crisis. The whole country is with you," Vajpayee told victims of the riots. "I lost my sister just three days ago. I know how painful it is. But you have suffered far more. You have become homeless and refugees in your own country. Many of you have lost your dear ones."

The Prime Minister said he had not come to Gujarat to count deaths. "We have seen enough deaths. I have come here to tell the people that we will do our level best to end the suffering."

See Page 6

UPROAR IN ASSEMBLY, OPPOSITION MEMBERS SUSPENDED

Violence erupts again on eve of PM's Gujarat visit

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, APRIL 3. On the eve of the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit to the riot-hit areas in Gujarat tomorrow, at least nine persons were killed today in violent incidents. Six of them were burnt alive in Abasana village in Ahmedabad district.

Some of the walled city areas in Ahmedabad were again brought under an indefinite curfew after the city witnessed pitched battles between the two groups in Gomtipur where two persons were killed and nine injured in police firing. One person was killed in the police firing in Umreth in central Gujarat. Besides the mob attack, the police went berserk, beating up people in Gomtipur and Vejalpur, severely injuring at least 80 persons.

The continued disturbances figured in the Assembly and the House was adjourned sine die after it completed the remaining business of the current budget session in the absence of the Opposition members who were suspended earlier for disrupting the proceedings.

With the gruesome incidents of burning people alive recurring on the eve of the Prime Minister's visit, six members of a minority family in Abasana village under the Detroj police station in Ahmedabad district were killed when some mis-



A house set ablaze by rampaging mobs at Abhasana, a village near Ahmedabad, on Wednesday. — AP

creants set their houses afire late on Tuesday night when the entire village was fast asleep. While five persons died on the spot, one died of injuries in hospital.

It was the first time after the three days of mayhem from February 28 in the aftermath of the Godhra carnage that an incident of burning people alive had occurred. The local sarpach, however, claimed that the miscreants had ransacked houses belonging to the minorities and killed the people before setting fire to the houses. He said the assailants, numbering about 20, were outsiders

and their identity was not known. They had come armed and equipped with inflammable materials. The Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, while condemning the Abasana attack said that some persons seemed bent on creating disturbances and issued a stern warning against disrupting peace.

In Umreth, one person was killed and two were injured when police fired 16 rounds to disperse unruly mobs setting fire to houses and shops for the third consecutive day defying the indefinite curfew.

An indefinite curfew was also clamped in Vadali town in Sa-

barkantha district following arson and group clashes. The Ankleshwar town in Broach district was again brought under an indefinite curfew following clashes.

The labour-dominated Gomtipur locality in Ahmedabad witnessed an unprecedented mob fury despite being under curfew. After the pitched battles on Tuesday, the mob regrouped and attacked slums this afternoon and ransacked houses. Policemen, who arrived on the scene, instead of helping the victims, beat them up. Even an 80-year-old woman, Chandbibi, was not spared while a local journalist present on the spot covering the event also received lathi blows. At least 60 persons were treated in hospital for injuries inflicted by police.

In contrast in the Vejalpur locality, police raided some Hindu residential areas and beat up the people there. Some of them were paraded under the hot sun or made to walk on their knees. "You people are harassing us by creating disturbances," the policemen are reported to have told them.

The entire Opposition in the Assembly was suspended for the remaining period of the current budget session after the Congress members created an uproar demanding that they be allowed to move an adjournment motion to discuss the communal riots.

PM will be on shaky ground in Gujarat

Sacking Modi is easy option, ensuring justice is the tough part for Vajpayee

By Siddharth Varadarajan
Times News Network

NEW DELHI: When Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee arrives in Ahmedabad on Thursday, he will confront the greatest political challenge he has ever faced in all his years in public life.

The BJP and the Sangh Parivar—which Mr Vajpayee once said was his “soul”—stand discredited for the killing of close to 900 people and destruction of property worth hundreds of crores of rupees. Senior state-level leaders of the BJP, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal have been named in police first information reports for inciting murderous attacks on the minority community, and against those in the majority community who tried to shelter the former. Worse, the violence continues even

after 35 days. Thanks to his indifference to chief minister Narendra Modi's handling of affairs, the Prime Minister's own image has taken a beating.

Officials here say that Mr Vajpayee will ask Mr Modi what steps the administration has taken to restore peace. “The army is at the state government's disposal as are the paramilitary forces. The PM wants to know why the CM has not sought any further assistance to restore law and order when the forces available are not up to the job,” these officials say. They also question the state government's decision not to seek additional medical help from the Centre even though the conditions in the camps are pathetic.

In the light of all that has been revealed

about the partisan nature of the state government, including this week's indictment of it by the National Human Rights Commission, dismissing Mr Modi is perhaps the easiest decision Mr Vajpayee can take at the present juncture. What he will find much more difficult is to follow through on the NHRC's recommendations to ensure that the guilty in Gujarat are punished.

At stake, say observers, is not just Mr Vajpayee's position within a restless Sangh

but the very political survival of the *parivar* and its front organisations, which will not be able to withstand the seismic impact of an impartial investigative and judicial process. Just as the Congress could not afford to have criminal liability fixed for the 1984 riots, the BJP leadership has realised that it cannot afford to let justice take

its course in Gujarat. Already, there are reports that the forensic skills of the local police are being used to ensure the sabotage of riot cases.

The NHRC wants the CBI to investigate the Godhra carnage and the orchestrated killings that followed. Even if Mr Vajpayee agrees to the demand, few are likely to be reassured. Ten years after the Babri masjid was demolished, say frustrated CBI insiders, the agency has not been able to begin the criminal prosecution of BJP and RSS leaders accused of the crime.

Senior officials expect the PM to be reminded of these home truths when he visits the massacre victims in Ahmedabad.

► See Edit: Atal's Acid Test, Page 8



A policeman opens fire in the Gomtipur area of Ahmedabad on Wednesday.

5 killed as Gujarat continues to burn

Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: Five members of a family were hacked to death and their bodies burnt while ten persons sustained injuries when a group of miscreants attacked them around midnight on Tuesday in Abasana village in Ahmedabad district. Meanwhile, at least three others were killed in Ahmedabad city on Wednesday on the eve of the Prime Minister's visit to riot-affected areas of the state.

Five bodies were recovered from three houses in Abasana, 70 km from Ahmedabad city, which had been set afire by a group of ten to 15 persons. According to information available with the Detroj police station, six persons sustained severe injuries during the group clashes that followed.

The incident took place when a mob

attacked unsuspecting families from the minority community with swords and scythes. “We were sleeping...suddenly these people barged inside and started flashing their scythes. They killed my husband. I do not know what happened to my daughter-in-law,” says 60-year-old Labhiben Ismail who has sustained severe injuries.

The charred bodies were found early on Wednesday morning after firefighters put out the blaze. Senior officials of the district and police administration are camping in the village and several persons were arrested by Wednesday noon, officials said.

Ahmedabad city continued to burn when one person was done to death in the Madhavpura area and two persons were killed in police firing in Gomtipur after a mob tried to torch a chawl on Wednesday.

Violence spreads to new areas of Gujarat

Curfew in Anjar, 4 stabbed in Ahmedabad

Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: Gujarat witnessed wide-spread incidents of rioting and arson on Tuesday. Trouble was reported from many places in the state on Tuesday, including Ahmedabad, where four persons were stabbed, just two days ahead of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit to the riot-affected areas. Four places of worship were attacked in Anjar town in the sensitive border district of Kutch, where violence erupted late on Monday night.

The repercussions of the nearly unbroken sequence of communal riots in the state in the last month were felt in Kutch on Tuesday and police fired five rounds to disperse a mob in Anjar. In Vadodara, acid bulbs were hurled at city police commissioner D.D. Tuteja while he was supervising combing operations in the Machchipith area at about midnight.

Curfew was imposed after the eruption of trouble following the destruction of a place of worship in Anjar. Police said

that after some miscreants desecrated a shrine late in the night, people began protesting by resorting to stone-throwing and arson. Sources said that in the subsequent retaliatory attacks, two places of worship were destroyed and eight shops burnt. Police fired five rounds to disperse the rioters. One person was injured and 40 persons were arrested, said Kutch superintendent of police Subhash Trivedi.

Deputy inspector general of police (border range) Sudhirkumar Sinha, who was camping in Anjar, told TNN that an 18-year-old boy, Mohammad Rafiq, who was arrested for putting up inflammatory posters on Tuesday morning, confessed to having desecrated the shrine. He also claimed that he had been paid money and promised free railway tickets to Ajmer if he did the job, said Mr Sinha.

According to Mr Sinha, the boy claimed that a person who had come from Delhi on the Bareilly-Bhuj Express on Monday afternoon had entrusted him with the job. "It remains to be investigated whether the incident was purely communal or had some larger motive behind it," he said.

Kutch has been largely peaceful in the last month thanks to strict police action taken by superintendent of police Vivek Shrivastava. He was replaced by Mr Trivedi last week.

In the Khanpur area of Ahmedabad, police fired 39 rounds in the air late on Monday night and lobbed 15 tear-gas shells when rioting mobs resorted to pelting in the Kalyanivaas area. The rioters were quelled after the army reached the spot.

However, violence refused to die down in Anand district, with fresh violence reported from the town on Tuesday morning, police sources said. Two persons were killed and two injured in police firing in Umreth town, where mobs burnt down about ten



Policemen inspect crude bombs seized from the Shahpur area of Ahmedabad on Tuesday.

shops. Police fired 20 rounds and imposed indefinite curfew in the afternoon.

The Ankleswar town of Bharuch district, which had been peaceful for some time, also witnessed a communal flare-up late on Monday evening as mobs from the two communities faced each other in the old town area and exchanged a hail of stones and glass bottles. While the police had to fire several rounds to disperse the mob, a constable was injured by a stray stone. Curfew, which was in force during the night, was extended during the day as well.

Fresh trouble broke out in the Karanj, Khadia and Naroda areas of Ahmedabad and police had to open fire in Khadia. Four locked houses were burnt in Mohan Darji ni Chaali area of Kagdapith.

NHRC indictment shocks Gujarat

By Manas Dasgupta

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GANDHINAGAR, APRIL 2. The indictment of the Gujarat Government by the National Human Rights Commission for its alleged failure to curb the post-Godhra violence has shocked the State Government.

"It is not the time for allegations and counter-allegations, the first priority should be to restore peace and confidence among the people. Introspection can be carried out later," a senior bureaucrat said.

The official denied that there was any "instruction" from the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, or any other political boss restraining the administration from acting tough against hooligans. The indictment of the entire administration as "wilful submission" to the hooligans was "unwarranted."

The NHRC's suggestion that the CBI investigate incidents like the burning alive of people in Meghaninagar and Naroda-Patia — both in Ahmedabad city — and Sardarpura in Mehsana district, also reflects its concern over "saffronisation" of the administration under the BJP dispensation.

The process began immediately after the BJP came to power — for the first time on its own — in 1995 and Keshubhai Patel became the Chief Minister. Mr. Patel disbanded most of the advisory committees in the dis-

tricts and talukas, as well as the State-owned Boards and Corporations and packed the bodies with people from the Sangh Parivar.

The efforts, however, received a setback due to Shankarsinh Waghela's rebellion against the State leadership. Suresh Mehta, a moderate, emerged as the compromise candidate between the warring Patel and Waghela factions to become the Chief Minister. He stalled the saffronisation process but could not stop it completely because he could not displease Mr. Patel who evoked tremendous public sympathy.

The process was reversed when Mr. Waghela replaced Mr. Mehta a year later with outside support from the Congress. His Rashtriya Janata Party cadres and the Congress supporters returned to the State-owned Boards and Corporations and the reorganised committees.

Mr. Patel's return to power after the 1998 elections saw the renewal of the saffronisation process in full swing. Importance was given to the cadres from the Sangh Parivar to dominate the numerous advisory committees at the district and taluka levels, including the Police Advisory Committee, the Social Justice Committee and others wielding enormous powers in the appointment and transfer of Government officials.

The recruitment of teachers at the village

level, launched by the Waghela administration, was used by the Patel Government to "infiltrate" the villages. Most of the 20,000 "vidya sahayaks" recruited to man the schools in the villages were picked from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad was encouraged to open schools in remote villages. The syllabus in the schools was often subtly changed to suit the saffron ideology.

The Government's efforts to "colour" its employees, however, suffered a setback when it was forced to withdraw — following countrywide indignation and protests by the Congress in Parliament — its notification of January, 2000, allowing the Government employees to attend RSS "sakhis." But in the two months the notification was in force, at least 5,000 employees were said to have attended the RSS camp in Ahmedabad.

As a retired bureaucrat who worked in the Patel administration pointed out, it is difficult to assess how many Government employees still keep in contact with the RSS to please their political bosses. It may not be a coincidence that barring one person, no District Collector or development officers come from the minority community. And among senior police officers, those belonging to the minority community have been mostly sidelined.

HP-10

Who are the guilty?

Punishment and confidence building in Gujarat

By Dipankar Gupta and Romila Thapar

NARENDRA MODI'S eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation with the Prime Minister was really quite a mild affair. Mr. Vajpayee upbraided Mr. Modi, but in the mildest manner possible. He was not even rapped on the knuckles! Instead of pulling him out of his chair, the Prime Minister suggested a variety of confidence-building measures to the errant Chief Minister. He was asked to construct homes for those affected, find them jobs, give them armed escorts, get businesses to contribute to their relief and rehabilitation, and so on. Not once was it mentioned that the Government of India would use all its powers to punish the guilty — and that this also included Mr. Modi.

Unfortunately, the demand to punish the guilty is not on the agenda of the Opposition either. All they want is the removal of the Chief Minister. This is really political gamesmanship. Of course, Mr. Modi ought to go, but if he sinks alone and is not weighted down by those other criminals who killed, burnt, maimed and looted then he might emerge as a political martyr. To bring credibility to Mr. Modi's ouster, he needs to be punished along with all those who are actually red in tooth and claw. This includes those who torched the railway coaches in Godhra as well as those who stalked and killed Muslims in Ahmedabad, and elsewhere in Gujarat, in recent weeks. It is indeed a sad reflection on the politics of our times that the Opposition has not come out with such a demand.

This is not the first time that a Government is directly implicated in fomenting and leading communal riots in the country. The 1984 killings of Sikhs is a cruel predecessor of what happened recently in Gujarat. The way the civil liberties groups mobilised in 1984 was, however, quite remarkable. Instead of doing social science and discovering caste and class antagonisms behind the killings,

The best way of fighting communalists is not by tiptoeing around them in the hope of letting sleeping dogmas lie, but by taking them on frontally every time they break the law.

the People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) and the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) jointly conducted a first rate social forensic study and brought out a report entitled "Who are the Guilty?" The data in this little booklet were compiled on the spot by PUDR activists in Delhi even as they went about trying to bring relief to the besieged Sikhs. This booklet named those who were directly involved in the murder and mayhem, it gave evidence of responsible politicians leading mobs from the front, and it also carried authentic eye-witness accounts. This booklet sent shock waves all the way up. Though a thousand manoeuvres were dreamt up by the Government in power, the fact that the perpetrators of the killings were named made it very difficult for even these people to emerge again as legitimate political actors. "Who are the Guilty" should indeed be a prototype of how citizens can respond to riots in this country. It is obvious that citizens can no longer sit on the sidelines when communal carnages occur in the belief that the state machinery will do its job and punish the guilty. Most of those in state administration see themselves as Government servants and not as servants of the public. This is why they are not as mindful of citizens' interests as they are of the wishes of the Government in power. In such a situation the public must assert itself and demand the names of individuals who led and participated in the communal killings, regardless of which community they may belong to. It is only by putting such people on trial that confidence can meaningfully be restored in Gujarat. This will also send

warning signals to all would-be rioters in the future. As Justice Verma, Chairman of the Human Rights Commission, recently commented, police inaction in Gujarat is tantamount to police complicity. If the guilty are tried and punished then this will also expose another lie on which communalists thrive. The popular assumption is that these sectarianists are as willing to kill for a cause as they are to die for a cause. This is a complete fallacy. None of the hotheads of the RSS, or Bajrang Dal or the Vishwa Hindu Parishad will ever die for a cause. In which case, why are they so willing to kill for a cause? The answer to this is very simple. It is because they know that no harm will come to them as they enjoy active or tacit protection from the Government of the day. It is cover of this sort that makes sectarian activists appear so frightening. Take away Government support and they will all expose themselves as paper tigers.

It is time now to remember how Jawaharlal Nehru handled the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha when he was at his best. Partition had just happened and Hindu sectarianists were having a field day, even in the city of Delhi. Nehru did not reason and plead with them. He locked them up in jail whenever they broke the law. When Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated, Nehru again acted swiftly and unambiguously. He banned the RSS and other allied organisations and exposed their shallow bravado. The leaders of the RSS made several overtures to Nehru (and Patel) to lift the ban against them. Golwalkar even tried to curry favour with the Government by promising to fight communi-

sm. In a letter to Nehru he said the ban on the RSS should be lifted so that the swayamsevaks could help the Government in ridding the country of the red menace. No mention now of the Muslims, nor of any other religious minority. When that did not work the RSS tried satyagraha, which was again a flop. Eventually the RSS leadership had no option but to agree to a written constitution as demanded by the Government. This constitution had to clearly state that the organisation would treat all faiths with equal respect and would refrain from entering politics and resorting to violence.

Nehru was clearly not intimidated by the rhetoric of these sectarian Hindu activists and simply called their bluff. It was Nehru's uncompromising stand against communalists that allowed the Congress to win election after election, from the perverted post-Partition days right up to 1967. The best way of fighting communalists is not by tiptoeing around them in the hope of letting sleeping dogmas lie, but by taking them on frontally every time they break the law.

Mr. Vajpayee would like Mr. Modi to find jobs for the devastated, get industrialists to donate money, Bhuj style, hold hands with the aggrieved families, even set up goodwill marches, and so forth. All sweet talk and a few pieces of silver! What the Prime Minister has cleverly sidestepped, and what the Opposition has not pressed upon him, is that nowhere has he asked of Mr. Modi: "Who are the guilty?" Without raising this issue, no amount of relief and goodwill missions will help in restoring confidence in Gujarat. If the guilty are not punished by the due process of law then this might engender cynicism, and, what is worse, vigilante-style reprisals — both of which are deleterious to the well being of the country as a democratic republic. As citizens we have the right to demand that the guilty be punished first! And Mr. Modi is not the only one we are thinking of.

Insecure Modi feels the heat

Sudesh K Verma in New Delhi *SR*

April 1. — Mr Narendra Modi's future looks a little less secure with an "angry and disappointed" Prime Minister, a "divided party", and two crucial forthcoming events — the PM's visit to Gujarat on Thursday during which "clarifications" will be sought, and the 12-14 April BJP national executive meet in Goa, where an attempt "will be made to isolate hardliners (read Modi backers).

Liberals in the BJP and those in government reportedly feel a mid-term poll in Gujarat should be avoided even if it means losing a state government. They are worried about the international ramifications of the violence targeted against a particular community.

The vocal hardliners calculate that a mid-term poll within two months would give at least a two-thirds majority to the BJP in Gujarat. (But their plans seem to have been

'Shah panel at work

AHMEDABAD, April 1. — The K G Shah Commission set up by the government to probe the Sabarmati Express arson and its aftermath has been functioning since 7 March, an official release said today. The Commission was set up under the Commission of Inquiry Act 1952 on 6 March.

In a fresh outbreak of violence in the state tonight, police opened fire in Khanpur when a mob tried to attack some houses there. There were no immediate reports of injury. Army and paramilitary jawans have been deployed. — PTI

upset by Mr Modi, who, according to a PTI report tonight, ruled out early Assembly polls.

The liberals are apparently working overtime to prevail over the hardliners as replacing Mr Modi without a consensus could further ag-

gravate the violence and deepen the divisions within the Parivar.

BJP president Mr Jana Krishnamurthy has already started working towards this plan. He has asked executive members to tell him about the issues they would like to speak about and also the points they would include in their respective presentations.

Sources said this was to prevent hardliners from raking up the Gujarat issue in a manner that would send wrong signals to the country and the world. Those working in Indian missions abroad are having tough time explaining the happenings in the state, a government official said.

The tone against Mr Modi may be set during the Prime Minister's visit to the state on Thursday. Mr Vajpayee is likely to visit some of the camps of riot victims. He will reportedly seek clarifications from the chief minister for his failure to control violence.

Turn to page 6

2 Apr 2001

RECEIVED

Fresh violence in Gujarat

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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

AHMEDABAD, March 30. — Khambhat and Kadi towns in Mehsana district were tense following violence on Friday night even as most parts of the Gujarat remained peaceful on Saturday, barring a stabbing incident at Hajipura garden in Ahmedabad, police said.

Police opened fire and burst teargas shells at Kheda, Nadiad and Adas of Anand district in the last 24 hours. Police also had to open fire at Panigate in Baroda on Friday night. Meanwhile, indefinite curfew continued at Viramgam and Sarkhej in Ahmedabad and at Prantij. Curfew was lifted from 16 police station areas and was relaxed in six police station areas on Saturday morning, police added. However, Sarkhej and Juhapura remained tense.

Curfew was in place in 11 towns and cities, including parts of Vadodara. About 32 people arrested from a village in Anand. Curfew continues in Modasa, Prantij and Bharuch.

Uttar Pradesh

Criminals allegedly desecrated a mazaar in the city this morning. The incident sparked off violence with mobs

attacking places of worship and setting ablaze vehicles.

Prohibitory orders have been clamped in the area.

The mob tried to damage a flag atop a temple in Idgah locality and threw stones at another temple in Kazipura area, Mr Lal said. About 100 people have been arrested. Of them, 30 have been booked for the desecration of the mazaar, Mr Lal said. There was violence in Agra too.

Bihar and Jharkhand

Seven persons were killed and 69 injured in several incidents of firing and clashes between communities or caste groups in Bihar and Jharkhand during Holi.

Police said four persons were killed in Gaya, one each in Nawada and Sitamarhi in Bihar and another in Jharkhand's Garwah district. Twenty-four people were injured in Nawada when criminals fired at a group of villagers when they were returning home after attending a function.

Maharashtra

Five persons were killed and 11 injured in violence at Akola. Indefinite curfew has been imposed on the town, reports PTI. The situation was tense but under control, police said.

DE STATESMAN
31 MAR 2002

PM opposes snap poll in Gujarat

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: The Prime Minister turned down Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi's suggestion of a snap poll in the state because he felt the state BJP's assessment that the communal polarisation, following the riots, could lead the party to victory is misplaced.

BJP sources here said that the violence has taken its toll of economic activity and has affected enough Hindu businesses to neutralise the polarisation it is depending on. Two, if the state government seeks dissolution of the assembly, there is no guarantee the Election Commission would call elections soon enough for the party to "benefit" from such a polarisation.

Three, if elections are held soon, the assessment is that they would

be so bloody they might be difficult to control. As a senior BJP leader put it rather euphemistically, "If elections are held now, when tempers are running high, the mindsets would harden further." Of course, the PM does not want to replace Modi as yet for two reasons — he does not want to be seen to be acting under pressure from the opposition and with Mr Modi having become something of a "hero" in Sangh circles, it is clearly not the right time to move him out.

Moreover, with the decisive rout of the BJP in the Delhi civic polls and the cross-voting in the Rajya Sabha elections in Karnataka — which saw the defeat of party candidate Tharadevi Siddharta— and following which the BJP has been forced to expel six of its legislators,

the BJP leadership feels it should not risk an election in Gujarat. As things stand, it is rapidly disappearing from the political map: Currently, it is in power only in Gujarat, Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh.

The BJP's relationship with its allies is not too happy either: In Tamil Nadu, the DMK has cut its ties with the BJP; in Andhra Pradesh, the TDP is hesitating to name its nominee for a successor to late GMC Balayogi, Lok Sabha speaker; in Punjab, the Akali Dal is still sore that the BJP let it down in the recent assembly elections; in Orissa, the Biju Janata Dal is not that happy with the way the BJP's sangh relatives in the VHP/Bajrang Dal stormed the state assembly.

REPRIEVE FOR CM, BUT ONLY JUST

Take quick steps, PM tells Modi

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Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 27. — The Gujarat chief minister, Mr Narendra Modi, got a reprieve, albeit accompanied by a reprimand from the Prime Minister, whom he met here today.

Mr Vajpayee reportedly disagreed with Mr Modi about the extent of relief and rehabilitation

work carried out in post-Godhra Gujarat and asked him to take quick and effective measures. The chief minister has time till 4 April when Mr Vajpayee is slated to visit select camps in the state.

“You cannot say the situation is returning to normal when 97,000 people are living in relief camps out of fear or compulsion,” he reportedly told Mr Modi in the presence of Mr LK Advani. This was the first meeting at this level after the Godhra incident, wherein Mr Modi made a detailed presentation to Mr Vajpayee and Mr LK Advani.

Mr Vajpayee also referred to media reports that called the transfer of a section of the police brass a ‘punishment’, while Mr Modi referred to the same as a ‘reward’. The Prime Minister asked Mr Modi to bridge the gap between the perceptions of the government and the media by ensuring greater transparency.

Mr Modi reportedly expressed reservations over engaging NGOs or the state in the recon-

struction of homes of the riot-hit, as had been the case after the Bhuj quake. Apparently, in this Mr Modi is being guided by electoral considerations. When the Prime Minister asked him how such people would be rehabilitated, he had no answer. He then asked Mr Modi to prepare a fool-proof rehabilitation plan.

The chief minister told Mr Vajpayee that

there are three categories of people in the camps: The first includes those whose houses were damaged or gutted; the second of those who were scared to return; and the third of those who were there for the free food, which includes some Bangladeshi migrants. Mr Vajpayee, however, refused to buy the argu-

ment that people could come to the camps for free food.

The Prime Minister may announce a relief package during his visit to Gujarat. Mr Modi today requested him to bear 50 per cent of the compensation for riot victims, to which Mr Vajpayee agreed, an official release said.

After the meeting, Mr Modi said everyone — including Mr Vajpayee — was satisfied with the handling of the situation. He stressed there was no talk of change in leadership. But this did not go down well with some leaders, who told Mr Modi not to make such claims to the media.

Violence robs Holi of its colour, p6

Vajpayee worried over saffron shade

NEW DELHI, March 27. — In a clear disapproval of recent actions of Hindu fundamentalists, the Prime Minister tonight said it would be better to “keep a distance” from the kind of Hindutva now being practised by some.

Releasing a book by Mr KR Malkani, he said when Swami Vivekananda spoke of Hinduism, nobody called him communal. “But now, some people have defined Hindutva in such a manner that it is better to keep a distance from it.” He said Hindutva should not be equated with religion as it was “a way of life”. — PTI

THE STATESMAN

23 MAR 2002

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If there is anything more horrific than the continuing violence in Gujarat today, then it must be the inverted logic that is being trotted out by various sangh factions to justify it. From being sanctified as a "natural and spontaneous reaction" to Godhra, to being condoned as a legitimate expression of majority anger, one mind-numbing rationalisation has followed another. Adding to this spectacle are the smug pronouncements of the state chief minister. When large-scale "reprisal" killings first broke out in the state, Narendra Modi blamed it on the "irresponsible" and "provocative" coverage of Godhra by the media. This soon gave way to a phase of serene complacency in which Mr Modi proclaimed complete normality in the state and patted himself on the back for having checked the violent aftermath of Godhra within 72 hours. Alas, the facts speak otherwise: Not only has there been no peace in the state — a full 600 hours after the mayhem first began — worse, there has been no serious intent on the part of the Modi government to give succour to the victims of violence. This is not an assessment made by a hostile media or secularist critics. These are the findings of an on-the-spot investigation conducted by a high-powered team from the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). Led by NHRC chairman, Justice JS Verma, the team has also taken the Modi government to task for its "inaction" and "inefficiency" in "anticipating" or "controlling" the violence. Mr Verma has dismissed the state government's report on the violence as "perfunctory". Predictably, Mr Modi has responded to the criticism in the only way he can. By more self-serving logic.

Having on an earlier occasion taken recourse to Newton's third law to explain the inevitability of the violence, he has now shifted the onus of responsibility on Parliament, attributing the continuing incidents of lawlessness and mob violence to "irresponsible" statements made by opposition leaders on the Gujarat situation. "One statement is made in Delhi and one incident of violence is reported somewhere in Gujarat", he is quoted as saying. In the days to come, the august House will no doubt debate whether Mr Modi's finger-pointing against honourable members constitutes a case of contempt or a breach of parliamentary privilege. Meanwhile, it is time to give Mr Modi his due. Perhaps there is something that he knows about legislative complicity in violence which we do not. Incidentally, what we do know now is that on the day Newton's third law took effect with such devastating consequences in Ahmedabad, two of Mr Modi's ministerial confidants reportedly stationed themselves at the central police control room in the city. And whatever else the latter might have been up to, they did not plot peace. So instead of reacting with shock and alarm, it is time that the opposition had the patience to learn a thing or two about democracy and its dangers from Mr Modi. For a start, they could probably think in terms of shutting down Parliament for a while. After all, they have it on the assurance of the all-knowing Mr Modi that the violence in Gujarat will abate the day opposition MPs disperse from Delhi and return to their constituencies. Clearly, no price is too high to pay if it can save the lives of innocents in Mr Modi's righteous realm.

Modi remark against Parliament flayed

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By Our Special Correspondent

AHMEDABAD, MARCH 25. The Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee president, Amarsinh Chaudhary, today accused the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, of having "cheated" even the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, in forming the all-party committee for communal riot victims.

Talking to media persons here today, Mr. Chaudhary said that while the Prime Minister had specifically promised to organise an all-party committee under the chairmanship of the Governor, Sunder Singh Bhandari, for the "rehabilitation" of the riot victims, the notification issued by the State Government last night after a delay of more than a week had referred only to the "relief camps".

Mr. Chaudhary said the more contentious issue was the rehabilitation of the affected "as it was" before the riots and not so much in providing relief to the affected. In many cases, the houses of the minorities had not only been damaged and demolished but had also been raised to the ground with bulldozers, leaving no trace of the buildings.

He said he had personally seen one such instance in the Naroda area in the city and due to his intervention the bulldozers left the scene.

Strongly reacting to Mr. Modi's statement that the disturbances in Gujarat would stop only after the Parliament session ended, Mr. Chaudhary said the Chief Minister had no right to criticise the highest democratic institution in the country and had only demonstrated that he had no faith in democracy but believed in autocracy. He said Mr. Modi was handling the affairs of the State as if Gujarat was his "personal fiefdom" and no one, not even the leaders of the stature of former Prime Ministers, apparently had any right to criticise his actions.

Reiterating that the disturbances in the State were "government-sponsored" and the killing and looting of the innocents were continuing unabated "under the very nose of the administration", the GPCC president also cautioned the bureaucrats and the police officers against "dancing to the tune" of the Chief Minister.

Quoting the National Human Rights Commission chairman

J.S. Verma, Mr. Chaudhary said the officers must act according to the law and not at the wishes of an individual. "Don't forget, Mr. Modi is not the permanent Chief Minister of Gujarat, and when the people throw him out for his autocratic behaviour, they will also not spare such officers who fail to rise up to the occasion and handle the situation boldly."

Pointing out that a few of the "upright" police officers who were not prepared to toe the Government's communal line had been "punished" with "insignificant postings", Mr. Chaudhary said Mr. Modi was not interested in restoring peace but encouraged disturbances to encash the Hindu card for the BJP in Assembly elections. But he said the Congress was confident that the communal card would not work and the sensible people of the State would teach the BJP a lesson for trying to create a votebank out of the "bodies of the innocents".

He said the Congress would organise a dharna at all taluka headquarters on March 27 for the restoration of peace in the State.

THE HINDU

26 MAR 2002

NHRC, PM pressure on Modi

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 24

PRESSURE PILED on the Narendra Modi Government today as the National Human Rights Commission tore into it for failing to contain the spiral of communal strife in Gujarat while the Prime Minister and the Home Minister made uncomfortable noises for the beleaguered Chief Minister.

In an unqualified censure, the NHRC said the State Government had miserably failed to anticipate and control the violence that erupted after the Godhra carnage. Speaking to reporters after his extensive tour of the riot-torn State, NHRC Chairman and former Chief Justice J S Verma also sought a comprehensive report on the violence from Modi.

"He (Modi) called on me before I left Ahmedabad for Vadodara and was with me for more than an hour. I said I would not wait for more than four to five days for your comprehensive report," Justice Verma said, adding that the Government's preliminary report "does not say anything significant and at any rate, does not answer any of the allegations that have been made".

He threatened that the NHRC would pass an order if the Modi Government did not furnish a comprehensive report within the stipulated time. In an interview earlier, he said he was "disturbed and shocked" at the persisting sense of fear and insecurity among the people, especially among the women who, he said, narrated to him "horrible" in-

stances of "inhumanity". Hitting out at the Modi Government for failing to restore normalcy in the State three weeks since the riots broke out, Justice Verma said he was yet to see any investigation on the ground. Even today, three persons were stabbed to death in Ahmedabad.

At a public rally in Shimla today, the Prime Minister described Godhra as "most unfortunate" and the later riots as "regrettable". In a not-so-veiled warning to Modi that it's time he got a grip on the situation, he said: "The violence in the State must stop."

L K Advani also spoke to Modi over the phone and asked him to ensure peace and harmony on Muharram and Holi and form peace committees.

Related reports on Page 6

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

9 MAR 2002

Modi reluctant to form rehab panel

Rathin Das
Gandhinagar, March 24

EVEN AS nearly 100,000 riot-hit people across the State are huddled in makeshift relief camps, the all-party rehabilitation committee headed by the Governor has become a bone of contention.

Though the formation of the committee was announced by the Prime Minister himself, the BJP-ruled State Government has effectively stalled the idea. The reluctance of the BJP to form the rehabilitation committee is reportedly emanating from the apprehension that the Congressmen would insist on the State Government re-building the houses and shops of the riot-hit people so that they can start their lives afresh.

Apart from making a big hole in the exchequer, the Government-financed rehabilitation process is likely to be resented by the rank and file of the Sangh Parivar thus making them disillusioned at a time when the State Assembly elections are only few months away.

On the other hand, it is being considered economical

Two more held

TWO MORE persons have been arrested in connection with the Sabarmati Express carnage at Godhra on February 27. With the arrest of Irfan Pado and Kasim Biryani on Saturday, the total number of arrests in this connection has gone up to 64. Both will be produced before the magistrate on Sunday for police remand, sources said.

PTI, Godhra

for the administration to maintain the relief camps, as its role there is minimal by way of supplying the bare essentials. "Yes, the State Government sends food supplies like sub-standard wheat, rice, cooking oil and mild powder," said the organiser of a camp, where 4,700 people are staying at present. Everything else is being arranged by the Good Samaritans of the community, he added.

Despite such sub-standard living conditions at relief camps, a Minister of the Modi Ministry has expressed his apprehension

that the existence of the camps in his constituency is a potential danger to the electorates of the area.

The indecision about the formation of the all-party rehabilitation committee has further extending their period of uncertainty.

More than a week has passed since the Prime Minister's announcement, but neither the Raj Bhavan nor the main Opposition Congress has received any communication from the State Government or the Chief Minister on the issue.

No one in the administration is willing to comment on the reason behind the non-formation of the all-party committee, but Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee president Amarsinh Chaudhary said that the BJP and its Chief Minister do not actually want them to be rehabilitated.

Chaudhary said that if asked for nominations to the committee from his party, the GPCC would definitely recommend the names of former Chief Ministers like Madhosinh Solanki and Sankersinh Vaghela who have earlier experience of rehabilitation work.

7 Modi withdraws Poto cases against Godhra accused

J. Srinivasan HT 28/3
HT Correspondent

Gandhinagar, March 22

CHIEF MINISTER Narendra Modi today withdrew the Poto cases slapped on the accused in the Godhra carnage, a day after the terror Bill was defeated 98 votes to 113 in the Rajya Sabha.

The timing of Modi's move — which came hours before a crucial meeting between the Prime Minister and NDA partners — suggests that it was a concession to coalition politics at the Centre rather than a need to heal the Gujarat Muslims' wounds.

The BJP is, of course, well prepared for a showdown on the terror Bill on March 26 at a joint session of Parliament, which was cleared by the President today. But till then, the party leadership is eager to avoid confrontation on the issue.

Gujarat being the only major state the BJP rules on its own strength, instances of misuse of Poto here is bound to echo through the Parliament joint session. Besides, the State Government has been accused of double standards on the issue, as it has refused to book under Poto the mobs that spread mayhem in the State in retaliation to the Godhra carnage.

Of the 62 people arrested for torching the Sabarmati Express carrying kar sevaks from Ayodhya, 21 have been booked under Poto which prescribes the death penalty for such crimes. But the cases against VHP activists and supporters for the later rioting are allegedly being weakened to let them off the hook during the long-drawn judicial process.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

28 MAR 2002

The Gujarat carnage — II

By Muchkund Dubey

100-10
2/17

IN THE ultimate analysis, the problem facing the nation is the BJP's accession to and continuation in power at the Centre. This has come about mainly because of the rise of Hindu communalism in India. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a large number of those whom one had least suspected to be communalists, turned into Hindutva fanatics. The overwhelming majority of them remain converted despite the belief of secular intellectuals and Opposition parties that Hindu communalism is on the decline because of the fundamentally secular character of Indian society. These people are either deluding themselves or finding an excuse to escape responsibility. They have to face the reality and seek to change it. There is no other way out if we want to save India.

To arrest and reverse the trend of Hindu communalism, we have first to understand what brought it about. There are several reasons; but three of them stand out. First, the so-called secular parties have made frequent compromises with communal forces. Second, these parties either never had or have long dropped, a pro-active agenda for inculcating and promoting secularism. Secularism has had no messiah after Subhash Chandra Bose, Gandhi and Nehru. Lastly, secularism has also suffered because of the unsavoury company it has kept recently — the company of the corrupt, criminals and habitual violators of the law.

In the 1930s, the Congress had evolved a comprehensive, integrated and multi-pronged programme for promoting communal harmony. This included, apart from removing social and economic disabilities and providing legal guarantees for the minorities, what Bose called "cultural rapprochement" (that is reaching out to the minorities) and "secular and scientific education". The practice of secularism was included in Gandhi's "constructive programme". Nehru made it a mission of his life to warn Indians against the danger of communalism. He left the imprint of secularism on the symbols of the new Indian state,

its protocol and practices, which the BJP leadership is trying to wipe out. Netaji made the INA the most glorious example of secularism in action. We have not seen even a distant resemblance to such programmes in the manifestoes of any of the secular political parties nor a secular Government in power implementing them.

The secular parties and organisations have done precious little to reconvert the Hindus who have become communal. None of them have formu-

undermine India's impressive gains recently on the diplomatic front. Our best chances for normalising the situation in Kashmir and averting the threat to our security posed by terrorist groups operating from Pakistan lie in the continuation and intensification of U.S. pressure on Islamabad to stop cross-border terrorism and to transform Pakistan into a liberal democratic state based on modern values. Even if the process of transformation set in motion in Pakistan is partially

Hindu communalism is as great a threat to India's social fabric as Islamic fundamentalism has been to Pakistan.

The Gujarat outrage has once again awakened us to the reality that the bureaucracy in the States and at the Centre is largely compromised vis-a-vis the ideology and objectives of the Government in power, that it has lost its guts and gumption and that it has by and large unreservedly become a part of the politicians' design to hold the country to ransom. Otherwise things would not have happened the way they did in Gujarat. The police were seen looking the other way at the peak of the targeted communal violence. In justification of this behaviour, the senior-most police officer advanced the extraordinary logic that the policeman is also swayed by the sentiments of the community to which he belongs. He should have known that a civil servant is recruited and paid not for being swayed by public sentiment — he should in fact be punished for that — but for discharging his duties. And the duty in this particular case was to maintain law and order at all costs.

Another demonstration of the cooption of the bureaucracy was the acceptance by the Officer on Special Duty in the Prime Minister's Office of the 'shila daan'. This shows the extent to which what was till recently known as the steel frame of Government is compromised. An honest officer should have clearly told the Government that he was not going to be a party to the sordid political deal designed by the BJP leaders in the Government to advance their sectarian goal of constructing the Ram mandir in Ayodhya.

The only option open to an honest officer is to take resolute action against extremist groups such as the VHP and the Bajrang Dal — to ban them, and to take their leaders into custody before they instigate violation of law and order. They should be clearly confronted as terrorist and fascist forces threatening our social structure and our unity and cohesion.

(Concluded)

The solution ultimately lies in once again pushing back the BJP, with its cohorts, to the margins of Indian politics.

lated and implemented on the ground a practical programme to convey the message of secularism. They have simply exploited secularism as a slogan to gain short-term political mileage. Their championing of secularism has been confined to skirmishes in Parliament, speeches in public meetings and interventions in seminars.

Even in Gujarat, the Opposition parties made representations to the President, issued statements, agitated in Parliament, visited the worst-affected scenes after the event and reported on what they saw and heard. These are recognised modes of political action, the significance of which cannot be denied. However, one would have liked to see workers and volunteers of these parties out on the streets, risking their lives to save the targeted minority population from the rampaging mobs.

What is needed is a systematic, sustained and painstaking programme to win over the Hindus who have crossed over to the wrong side of the communal divide. The solution ultimately lies in once again pushing back the BJP, with its cohorts, to the margins of Indian politics. In this endeavour, the secular political parties, civil society organisations and intellectuals and activists have to work in concert.

The Gujarat outrage threatens to

successful, it can strengthen pluralistic societies and improve the security environment in South Asia. Unfortunately, after the Gujarat carnage, we have lost the moral authority to press the U.S. to continue pressuring Pakistan to stay on course. Besides, all our gains in our recent lobbying with the Islamic countries on the issue of cross-border terrorism have been wiped out.

After Gujarat, it is apparent that we are in no better position than Pakistan. Our own society needs to be transformed to rid it of religious extremists who readily resort to terror tactics. As has till recently been the case in Pakistan, there is also Government complicity with the extremist groups. Pervez Musharraf has at least publicly distanced his Government from the fanatic elements and banned and clamped down on them. On the other hand, what we see in India on the Ayodhya issue, is a Central Government prevaricating and deploying the state machinery to placate such elements.

Recently, referring to the events in Gujarat, Gen. Musharraf warned against the danger posed by the "politics of communalism and the forces of extremism and terrorism". It is very difficult to disagree with him. Similarly, we are no longer in a position to fault those in Pakistan who argue that

THE HINDU

21 MAR 2002

The agony of Gujarat

By K. N. Panikkar

FOR FIVE days from February 28, Ahmedabad, the city of Gandhiji's early experiment with non-violent politics, witnessed an unprecedented communal carnage. What made it unprecedented was that it was not a communal riot, the fury of which Ahmedabadis had in ample measure in the past. It was a state-sponsored, supported and if the eyewitnesses are to be believed, even state-directed attempt at ethnic cleansing. From the RSS Pracharak Chief Minister to the police constable in the street everyone appears to have 'admirably' performed his role. While the RSS and VHP goons went around the city armed with lethal weapons, gas and oxygen cylinders and petrol, the state machinery stood aloof, permitting full play to the mayhem. The names of at least two Ministers are mentioned by many victims as instigating and directing the crowd. Both the Chief Minister and the Home Minister are accused of either involvement or abdication of duties, which ensured that the police did not take adequate steps to contain the violence. Hundreds of telephone calls were made to Ministers, to police officials and other Government functionaries from different localities for succour, only to be greeted with indifference and in many cases with scorn. Are we not citizens of this country, asked a young businessman in the Paldi area, a middle class locality in which quite a few apartments owned by Muslims were set on fire.

To the ordinary citizens, the state is a protector, which enables them to lead their lives without fear. Today fear is writ large on the face of the members of the minority community of Gujarat, for they are suddenly faced with the partisanship of the state, without any other source to look for support. This helplessness is the result of the state and its institutions turning communal in the wake of the BJP coming to power. But for the communal character of the state and its antipathy towards the minorities the carnage in Gujarat would not have taken place. Narendra Modi's Gujarat is a blueprint of the fu-

ture, if the Indian state comes fully under the control of the Sangh Parivar.

The attempt to justify the mass murder of the members of a community by the Chief Minister, the Police Commissioner and a host of BJP-VHP leaders on the grounds of being a spontaneous reaction is appalling. Invoking Newton to lend credence to their deformed minds is an insult to the great scientist. What happened to the passengers of the Sabarmati Express is indeed a heinous crime, which deserves to be

religious community settlements. The western side, on the other hand, is the new business district and the residential area of the affluent class. The upwardly mobile Muslims who have considerable business interests in this area are an eyesore to the middle and business class supporters of the Hindurva brigade. A marketing agency was recently employed to prepare a census of Muslim business establishments, the purpose of which was not then realised by anyone. The gangs

Narendra Modi's Gujarat is a blueprint of the future, if the Indian state comes fully under the control of the Sangh Parivar.

which went around the city and systematically destroyed Muslim businesses premises were well equipped with their names and addresses. Even their looting instincts which was otherwise quite evident did not induce them to target the nearby Hindu establishments. The very first sight of the destruction of property one comes across while driving from the airport to the city is the charred remains of Moti Minar, a hotel owned by a Muslim. More than 1,000 hotels, all of them vegetarian, located on the highways of Gujarat and owned by the Cheliya community of Muslims have been destroyed. Abid Shamshi, who was forced to leave a mixed locality in which he had lived for more than 30 years, fears large-scale migration of Muslims. He feels that the Muslims who have considerable business interests in the State can hardly afford to risk their investment. His fears are not misplaced. In the Naroda fruit market, 17 Muslim-owned shops have been gutted. Even a fruit shop jointly run by a Muslim and a Hindu, Ibrahim and Ramanlal, for the last 40 years was torched. Hardly a single Muslim business establishment has been spared. The Hindurva message to the minorities, as Prof. Shamshi says, is clear: there is no place for them in the nation, except by sufferance.

The colonies on the east bank wit-

nessed the most brutal violence. These are colonies inhabited by poor Muslims, most of them daily wage workers, living in hutments clustered together in narrow lanes. They were raided by thousands of well-armed VHP-RSS activists, in some areas led by local leaders. One of the worst hit area is Naroda where the entire colony of more than 5,000 inhabitants was repeatedly attacked, subjecting women to unprintable atrocities. Ram Sajeevan Saroj who was a witness to the attack said about 15,000 people roamed the area from 9 a.m. till late in the night. The police was conspicuously absent leaving the locality completely under the control of the armed mob. One of the activists tried to alert the police and the Home Minister without any success. About 700 people were reportedly killed in Naroda, some of them pushed into a well. Several women were gangraped and the number of young girls missing is not yet certain. Similar incidents were repeated in almost all colonies. Consequently, those who were able to escape have fled for safety and there are now more than 50,000 people in different relief camps run by NGOs and other organisations. Incidentally, the Government has not so far come forward in an effective manner to provide succour to another target of mob fury was the places of worship. About 30 mosques and dargahs have been razed to the ground. The events of the last few days indicate how brutalising communalism is. It destroys all noble sentiments in human beings. Gujarati society was ravaged by its worst manifestation. But even in such frightening situations what is essentially humane asserts itself. In different areas where the Hindurva goons had let loose a reign of terror, several Hindus have tried to protect and help the victims. But RSS pracharaks such as Mr. Modi, incapable of such response are pushing the nation to a dangerous brink. If India is not to be decimated by a civil war as in the case of Bosnia, the agony of Gujarat should not occur again, anywhere in the country. Does our political class have the foresight and energy to ensure that?

Furore in Gujarat assembly over riots

Times News Network

GANDHINAGAR: Amid slogan shouting by opposition MLAs calling for Narendra Modi's resignation, the Congress on Thursday sharply criticised the Gujarat government for the intelligence failure in predicting either the Godhra train massacre or the communal genocide that followed thereafter.

While Congress legislature party leader Naresh Raval asked why the forces that were supposed to be linked with the ISI were at all allowed to flourish in Godhra, Congress chief whip Siddharth Patel wanted to know why were the kar sevaks, returning from Ayodhya on February 27, not provided with police protection.

Mr Patel asked "I want to know from the state government what were the intelligence officials doing on that fateful day? Was there any prior information of what was to happen? If yes, then why were preventive steps not taken? The way the train was burnt and the manner in which the government allowed all this to happen leads one to suspect that the officialdom messed up things very badly somewhere."

The strong questions come at a time when Congress has begun making allegations that the state intelligence officials were all busy at Rajkot where chief minister Narendra Modi had just fought his assembly bypoll. Mr Patel also wanted to know as to why the officialdom failed to predict what was in store, even when the VHP gave a bandh call for February 28.

Referring to minister of state for revenue Haren Pandya's speech earlier, Mr Patel said, "It seems, the state government was fully aware of what would happen as a consequence to the

bandh call. Yet, it did not act in time. As a result, Gujarat's image has suffered a serious setback in the world."

Mr Pandya had said, speaking in the debate, "The events such as cross-border terrorism, attacks on the Hindus in Kashmir, the ISI activities in mosques and madrasas, the attack on Parliament in Delhi had an adverse impact upon the Gujarati Hindu psyche. It exploded after Godhra."

Gujarat House mourns Balayogi, not riot victims

Times News Network

GANDHINAGAR: Two Muslim MLAs — Usmanghani Devdivala (Independent) and Farooq Sheikh (Congress) — were ordered out of the Gujarat Assembly by deputy speaker Upendra Trivedi when they rushed to the well in protest against non-inclusion of the item on homage to the victims of communal violence in the written agenda circulated to the MLAs.

The House met on Wednesday after two weeks' interval due to the riots. Mr Sheikh, hailing from Ahmedabad, expressed his unhappiness that the Congress did not insist that the homage be included in the written agenda. It merely talked of "paying homage to Lok Sabha speaker late GMC Balayogi."

The two MLAs were forcibly taken out of the Assembly hall by four marshals even as Chief Minister Narendra Modi was paying his homage to Balayogi.

During his statement, Mr Pandya revealed that as many as 85,155 people lived in 91 relief camps in Gujarat. Minister of state for home Gordhan Zadaphia added that post-Godhra, 668 persons had died in communal violence, out of which 100 were victims of police firing. The two ministers, during their intervention, did not say whether there was any prior information of Godhra or the communal flare-up that followed. Mr Zadaphia confined his statement to when the army was called and how the riot was controlled within 72 hours.

Sharply criticising the BJP for playing the Hindu card, Mr Raval said, "The Congress is not a party of one community. Its voters include Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, others. We believe in brotherhood among all the people. The electoral politics that the BJP has begun to play makes one suspect that there is something fishy. The BJP must remember Hindus have always been our voters. They will support us in future also." He added, "I am worried about the future of Gujarat because after these riots investments will suffer."

The assembly, which began session at 8.30 a.m., was twice adjourned before the debate could begin as 50-odd Congress MLAs and independents shouted slogans demanding the CM's resignation in the wake of the state government's alleged failure.

There was also furore from BJP benches when a Congress MLA alleged that the CM had said he would hang himself if the riots were not controlled within 72 hours. The CM explained, he had actually said, "If controlling riots within 72 hours was a crime, I should be hanged."

Beyond Gujarat

Even as the country was holding its breath to see who would blink first on March 15, the parliamentary debate on the Godhra train attack and the subsequent communal conflagration in Gujarat was forestalled by an angry opposition which walked out of the House. This is hardly surprising considering that our parliamentarians have rarely shown a calibre that goes beyond stalling proceedings, storming the well of the House and passing the buck. Needless to say, this environment cannot foster either a worthwhile debate or constructive self-introspection. This is not to detract attention from the horror of Gujarat's recent communal outrage. It is imperative that what happened in Godhra and the communal flare-up thereafter are never repeated. For a start, all political parties must unequivocally condemn both the communal incidents, as well as the partisan attitude of the state government that contributed to spreading the violence. At the same time, it must be remembered that similar riots had erupted in 1984 and in 1992-93. Clearly, a basic reason for the frequent occurrence of communal violence is the current system of elections which, with its minority voting patterns, militates against the principles of secularism: Every election at panchayat, state and national level conducted under this system further divides communities and people. The result is that the biases and prejudices get transferred to the police force and the administration, to an extent where non-partisan democratic governance becomes virtually impossible. This is the core issue that arises out of the Gujarat riots and needs to be addressed on the basis of an all-party secular consensus.

Two major reforms are the crying need of the day. First, those who are empowered by law to deal with mob violence — the magistracy and the police — should be able to function autonomously within the legal framework without partisan political interference. In fact, any ministerial or other political interference in the enforcement of law and order by the duly authorised officials, should be made punishable through a public interest litigation petition. It should be made clear to the politicians, magistrates and police officials that the law expects only those duly empowered by it to deal with mob violence and restore peace. All other political interference should be treated as illegal. Second, in the half century since Independence, our Army has proved by and large to be apolitical and non-partisan. There have been repeated suggestions that the states' armed police battalions should recruit retired servicemen. They are already trained and conditioned by the Army ethos to have a non-parochial and secular outlook. These proposals have so far been resisted by state-level politicians with a vested interest in providing patronage through recruitment on a caste and communal basis. The recruitment, training, deployment, equipment and ethos of the state armed police battalions need to be completely overhauled to ensure that they discharge their duties without partisan considerations. Ultimately, a lasting solution can only come from replacing the unrepresentative first-past-the-post system of elections with polls that are truly won on a clear majority. Regrettably, our political class has a strong interest in fostering this divisive and anti-democratic system which cuts at the roots of our secularism. And nowhere is this more glaringly in evidence than in the supposed citadel of our democracy — our Parliament which increasingly resembles a fish market rather than a platform for serious debate.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Narendra Modi breaks all records in riot fields

By Rajiv Shah
Times News Network

GANDHINAGAR: Last month when Narendra Modi was contesting the Rajkot-2 by-election, the chief minister's office was busy giving out figures to show how the Bharatiya Janata Party regime had a very peaceful record on the communal front.



These statistics have now blown up in Mr Modi's face as the official death toll of 678 in the current Gujarat riots has surpassed the deadly 1969 riot toll of 660.

Keshubhai Patel, unceremoniously ousted from power late last year, can now claim that his tenure was the most peaceful after the first major communal flare-up in Gujarat in 1969.

In power between 1998 and 2001, comparative statistics show that only 33 people died in incidents of communal violence during his tenure, which also saw the burning of Christian shrines in the Dangs and stabbings in Ahmedabad.

In comparison, chief minister Narendra Modi, in power for less than six months, has the worst record, with already 678 people having been officially declared dead, including 60 in the Godhra train burning incident.

Highly-placed sources say that the official figure would rise further if one takes into account the recovery of bodies from different villages of the state. "We have yet to detect bodies in rural areas," a senior official said.

The 1969 riots, the worst to date, have already been pushed to the second spot. The official death toll quoted by the chief minister's office for the 1969 riots is 660.

During the recent by-polls, the present

chief minister had provided figure of the number of people who had been killed in communal violence during the tenure of other chief ministers.

Under Madhavsingh Solanki, who was chief minister on three occasions, 276 people died in 117 incidents of mob violence. Under Amarsingh Chaudhary, 582 persons died in 413 incidents of violence. And under Chimanbhai Patel, who was chief minister twice, 563 persons died in 370 incidents of violence.

In the period between 1994-97, when the state saw Chhabildas Mehta, Keshubhai Patel, Suresh Mehta, Shankarsingh Vaghela and Dilip Parikh become chief ministers, 29 people lost their lives in communal violence in the state.

Yet, there is some confusion in the communal riots figures maintained by the state. Police sources, giving a year-wise breakup of major communal flare-ups, say, in 1985, after the anti-reservation riots turned communal, as many as 210 people died; in 1990, when the L.K. Advani-led Rath Yatra began from Somnath to Ayodhya, 220 people died; in 1992, after the Babri Masjid demolition 325 people died, and in 1993, another 116 people lost their lives.

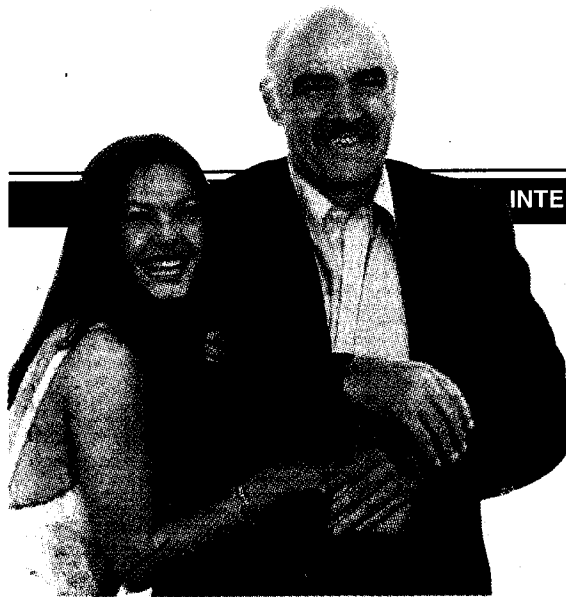
However, the figures furnished by government sources are at variance with those provided by the police sources.

When Mr Madhavsingh Solanki was the chief minister between 1980 and 1985, only 76 people died in communal flare-ups, and two persons lost their lives during his second tenure between 1989 and 1990.

From 1990 to 1994, when Mr Chimanbhai Patel was chief minister, 225 people died in communal violence and 76 persons lost their lives when Mr Amarsingh Chaudhary was chief minister.

There seems to be no explanation for this discrepancy.

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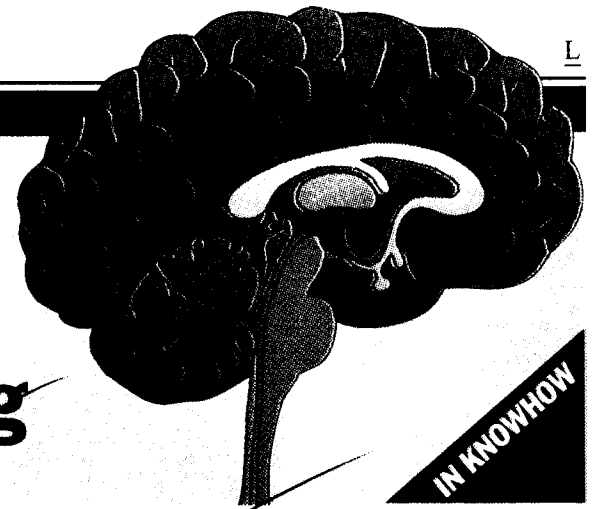
For sale, an idol from Bond days

PAGE 4

SRI LANKA SETTLES PAK SCORE

PAGE 12

Tips to keep your brain ticking



IN KNOWHOW

Distrust demolishes Ayodhya deal

1 killed in Bengal battle for yagna

OUR BUREAU

Calcutta, March 10: Ayodhya today cast a shadow on Bengal as a clash erupted between Vishwa Hindu Parishad supporters and police, killing one person and critically injuring two.

Around 1,000 VHP supporters clashed with the police at Taldi, a village near Canning in South 24-Parganas, after they were prevented from holding a yagna linked to the March 15 programme in Ayodhya.

The police admitted they had been informed of the programme but insisted no permission was given.

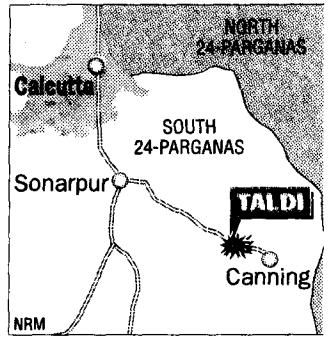
The police fired 25 rounds in the air on the increasingly belligerent crowd near the railway station after tear-gassing had no effect. Tapas Halder, 27, died on the spot. Around 50 people, including 25 policemen — were wounded.

In the evening, the state BJP claimed the six admitted to Bangur hospital were party supporters. The BJP has called a bandh in Canning tomorrow.

"We were determined not to allow the yagna as it would have led to disturbances in a vast area where the population is mixed and sensitive to such things," said Chayan Mukherjee, inspector-general of police (law and order). "Before resorting to firing, we used teargas and lathis without success."

The incident has exposed the police's inability to assess the situation despite advance information. Only 50 policemen were posted in the area, though tension was building up.

The VHP had announced it would hold the yagna at the 30-year-old Hariseva mandir near Taldi railway station, Mukherjee said. Local VHP leader Amar Ray, who was later arrested,



ed, said the police did not "stop" the parishad from preparing for the yagna. But superintendent of police Deb Kumar Ganguly said the administration had denied permission for the yagna and clamped Section 144 since Friday.

Women started assembling at the temple from 7.30 am. The devotees agreed to the police directive that only one person could enter the temple at a time.

Trouble erupted when a Canning-bound train pulled in at the station at 9.45 am. Several VHP activists — most had come by the train — started pelting stones. Heavily outnumbered — the ratio was 1:20 — the policemen burst tear-gas shells.

The crowd then charged at the policemen, forcing them to first fire in the air and then at the mob. The battle raged for more than 90 minutes. Relatives of the victims alleged that policemen fired on the crowd from point-blank range.

Though the Taldi programme spun out of control, a parallel one at Asansol was handled well. Over 100 VHP activists were arrested while trying to perform the same yagna.

See Page 8



Mounted CRPF personnel during a flag march in Ayodhya on Sunday. (AFP)

Board rejects seer plan, Nyas vows to defy court

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, March 10: The despair of 1992 hung over Ayodhya tonight with the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board rejecting the package offered by the Kanchi Sankaracharya and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad asserting that it would go ahead with the *bhoomi puja* on March 15.

With all players hardening their stands and the possibility of a confrontation looming, the Supreme Court hearing on Wednesday has emerged as the decisive factor.

The court is scheduled to take up a petition for army deployment in Ayodhya but a ruling is expected to cover the contentious issue of whether a *puja* could be carried out on the undisputed site.

The VHP today fielded its best-known hardliner, Praveen Togadia, to address reporters shortly after the board announced its decision.

Asked if the VHP would proceed with its *puja* even if the Supreme Court directed to the contrary, Togadia said: "Nobody in this country has the right to encroach upon the rights of Hindus to perform *puja*, *yagna*, *archan* and *upasana*."

His statement came a day after the Prime Minister said the last word on the *puja* would come from the Supreme Court. Togadia said: "There is no emergency. We also have fundamental rights. How can we expect the courts to curb this? We are certain we will get the permission."

Ramjanabhoomi Nyas convener Ramchandra Das Paramhans — before whom junior home minister I.D. Swami paid obeisance last Thursday — went a step further and declared there was no point in stopping at a symbolic *puja*. He said efforts should be made to start temple construction.

"Did 58 people sacrifice their lives for a symbolic *puja*?" he asked, referring to the Godhra carnage. "They did it all for constructing a temple. Why should we go there to perform only a religious rite?"

Late at night, Paramhans raised the pitch and told PTI in Ayodhya: "We will maintain status quo on the disputed land till the court judgment. However, if the court judgment goes against our religious feelings, we will not accept it. We will *amosse it even if it means shedding blood*."

The VHP spokesman warned that the minority law board's decision to oppose the *bhoomi puja* would have serious repercussions. "We will hold the *puja* on the undisputed land and as far as this is concerned, it is purely a matter between the Ramjanabhoomi Nyas and the Centre. There is no third party and the law board has no *locus standi* to oppose the March 15

shila puja," he said. The incendiary postures forced Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to go into a huddle with Cabinet colleagues L.K. Advani, George Fernandes and Arun Jaitley. Official sources said the "review meeting" discussed ways of preventing the situation from getting out of hand on March 15. It also finalised the stand to be taken before the apex court on Wednesday.

The Ayodhya administration has so far held its ground and refused to ease restrictions on the entry of *kar sevaks* despite a clear signal from I.D. Swami to do so.

The administration has also made public a terrorist threat in what is being seen as an attempt to keep senior VHP leaders away. Paramhans said sadhus would tomorrow lead a demonstration to the disputed site.

But the Centre kept afloat the possibility of another attempt to forge a consensus. Sources referred to a phrase in the minority board's statement — saying the Sankaracharya's proposals were "incomplete and inchoate" — and suggested that there was still a window open for dialogue — and said Vajpayee could ask the Kanchi seer to mediate again.

If he was referred to as the "prime mediator" in official circles for the past week, today he was described as the "architect" of the negotiations.

But a spokesman of the Kanchi monastery said: "Periyaval's (senior acharya's) role is virtually over. The acharya tried his best..."

See Page 6

'Glaring' omissions in formula

FROM RASHEED KIDWAI

WHY THE PLAN FELL THROUGH

- The board's reasons for rejecting the seer's proposal:
 - The absence of a temple construction plan
 - The Nyas' authority to undertake construction is not clear. The linkage between the Nyas and Sangh parivar organisations not clarified
 - No assurance from the VHP that it will abide by the court verdict
 - No assurance that if the Muslims win the title suit, the temple plan will be amended to shift the *garbh griha* elsewhere. No guarantee on mosque construction, not even on a dividing wall
 - The proposal ensures commencement of temple construction but fails to offer anything to the minority community

New Delhi, March 10: Faced with the inflexible attitude of hardliners on both sides, the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board today rejected the Kanchi Sankaracharya's formula of a symbolic *bhoomi puja* near the disputed site in Ayodhya on March 15, saying the proposal was "incomplete and inchoate".

The board said the Supreme Court would be moved against the *puja* plan. But the panel added that it would not object if the court cleared the *puja*. "There will be no agitation," assured Yusuf Muchala, convener of the board's legal cell.

The minority panel also reiterated its desire for an out-of-court settlement of the vexed issue. "The dispute cannot be resolved in a piecemeal manner. It has to be resolved in a holistic manner, in such a way that construction of the mosque is also not delayed," said the unanimous resolution adopted at the board's emergency meeting.

After day-long deliberations, the Muslim Personal Law Board members expressed their inability to accept the Sankaracharya's proposal, pointing out

that without the temple construction plans, it was difficult to understand the purported written undertaking given by the Ramjanabhoomi Nyas.

The board said another "glaring omission" was the absence of a written assurance from the VHP that it would abide by the court verdict. "At best, the proposals are 'workable arrangements' and do not offer (a) solution of the problem in its entirety," the board said. (See chart)

The panel managed to present a united face, but sharp divisions prevailed within. While the younger leadership felt that the board's rigid attitude would cost the community dear,

the old guard chided those who had called on the Sankaracharya, accusing them of falling into a "trap".

The elders said there was no question of negotiating on a mosque. "According to the Shariat, a mosque remains a mosque till doomsday," said G.M. Banatwala, an MP representing the Indian Union Muslim League. He found support from Ibrahim Sulaiman Sait, Syed Shahabuddin and Zafaryab Jeelani.

But Shahabuddin also voiced the community's willingness to abide by the court verdict. He said if the verdict went against the community, there would be no protest.

The board appealed to the Centre to ensure maintenance of status quo ante at Ayodhya and ensure that no symbolic *puja* takes place. It regretted that documents such as building plans of the temple, the site plan and the undertaking given by the Ramjanabhoomi Nyas to the Prime Minister had not been made available to the board despite repeated requests.

The panel sought the dismissal of the Narendra Modi government, linking it to the Gujarat carnage. It welcomed the Centre's appeal for expeditious hearing of the cases relating to the Ayodhya dispute. But a member said: "The key point which everyone failed to address is: who is going to build the mosque if the court verdict favours us?"

The outcome of the board's meeting did not cheer several community leaders. A profound sense of resignation pervaded the meeting hall, with most speakers confining themselves to rhetoric. Mutual suspicion was in the air; so was talk of a section of the board getting too close to the Prime Minister's Office. Of the 75 board members and about a dozen special invitees, only 67 attended the meeting.

Insecure community seeks refuge in self-imposed ban

Curfew cleaves Gujarat town

FROM CHANDRIMA BHATTACHARYA

Modasa (Gujarat), March 10: Two rows of shops stretch for about 500 metres on both sides of the highway in this budding town. Half of them are open, doing brisk business.

The rest are closed, though curfew has been officially lifted from Modasa, about 100 km from Ahmedabad. Then a tall sign looms into view with two words: "Janta curfew".

The closed shops belong to members of the minority community, who have declared the "janta curfew" because they still dare not move out of their homes.

More than a week after the carnage, as signs of normality are said to have returned to the state, minority pockets in Sabarkanta — one of the districts where blood was shed indiscriminately in the wake of Godhra — are still living under self-imposed curfew.

The "janta curfew" sign hangs a little away from the Modasa Road Transport Co-operative Society. It adds that the guilty should be punished. Some shop-owners in Modasa have put up another sign: "Welcome to Hindu Rashtra." The message is repeated in nearby Dhansura village.

These messages and the underlying threat are keeping the fear

alive in the Muslims. "Whatever the police may say, we are not safe. So we have imposed the curfew on our own," says M. Habibullah of the transporters' co-operative.

There's a small gathering at the society that provides truck services from Mumbai to Delhi and also acts as a financier. The transporters say the perpetrators of the violence are still at large and thriving. They are known faces from the neighbourhood, either traders or Bajrang Dal activists. But the police have done nothing to find them.

With its 4,000 members, the cooperative is also the hub of the minority community in Modasa and the villages around it. Of the 30,000 Muslims in the area, most are associated with the transport business in various capacities.

It made truck-owners the prime target. On the way to Modasa, from Bayad to Dhansura, the highway is littered with remains of burnt trucks. There's a charred vehicle every 100 metres for the first kilometre. Many trucks were waylaid at night and the drivers burnt inside. "We lost seven drivers, six of whom were from the society. Fifty of our vehicles were burnt," says Salimbhai Dadu.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

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MPs demand Modi, Advani's resignation

Times News Network 9/11

NEW DELHI: The opposition on Thursday barracked the BJP-led government over the Godhra carnage in Gujarat and the murder of a Samajwadi Party MLA in Lucknow. All major political parties, except the Bahujan Samaj Party, the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and the Nationalist Congress Party, staged a dharna outside the main gate of Parliament House to demand the resignation of Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister L.K. Advani for their failure to contain the communal frenzy that swept Gujarat.

Led by leader of the opposition Sonia Gandhi, the protesters did not raise slogans but merely held up placards.

Later, the two issues figured in both houses of parliament as agitated opposition members stalled the proceedings, resulting in adjournments. While the Lok Sabha was adjourned for the day without any business being transacted, the Gujarat issue was taken up for discussion in the Rajya Sabha in the afternoon.

Representatives of opposition parties conferred on Thursday afternoon to demand a discussion on the Gujarat situation in the lower house on Monday. CPI-M leader Somnath Chatterjee said that since an all-party delegation would visit Gujarat on Friday to assess the situation there, the opposition wanted this issue be taken up for discussion on Monday.

► **Rajya Sabha MPs cross swords over Modi's performance, Page 7**

Mob attacks convoy, Gujarat toll 525

Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: In yet another shocking incident of communal fury in Gujarat, a convoy of five vehicles carrying families from Chota Udepur to Vadodara under police escort on Tuesday was attacked by a mob, which set all the vehicles on fire. While at least three persons received serious burn injuries, a policeman who was attacked with sharp weapons was grievously injured.

The families had been trapped in a risky area for the last six days and were being shifted to Vadodara by the police in three trucks, a tempo and an autorickshaw when the mob intercepted the convoy and attacked it. However, most of the occupants managed to escape. All those injured have been admitted to a hospital in Vadodara.

Elsewhere in Gujarat, while most places remained largely peaceful, stray incidents of violence were reported on Monday night and Tuesday morning. The toll in the post-Godhra massacre riots has gone up to 525.

Three tribals from Tejgadh village in Vadodara were admitted to a hospital after being shot at by some youths in the wee hours of

Probe will cover riots, says Modi

AHMEDABAD: The judicial inquiry announced by the Gujarat government to investigate the Godhra incident will also cover the communal violence which erupted in various parts of the state in its aftermath.

This was announced by chief minister Narendra Modi at a press conference here on Tuesday. "The Godhra incident was not communal violence but an act of terrorism," Mr Modi said. He dismissed allegations of discrimination at the time of handing out compensation. (PTI)

► Dual standards, Page 9

Tuesday. Two of them are reported to be critical. In another incident, four people suffered burn injuries when a mob set their houses on fire on Monday night. Sporadic incidents of violence were also

reported from the tribal areas of Sabarkantha and the Panchmahals from where the police recovered two burnt bodies. In another incident at Panchmahals, a man was killed in police firing. In Ahmedabad, although one person was stabbed to death on Tuesday morning, no other major untoward incident was reported.

State urban development minister I.K. Jadeja, stationed at the state police headquarters to monitor the situation, said curfew had been lifted in most of the towns and cities in view of an improvement in the situation. He said that about 3,000 people had been held in various parts of the state in connection with the recent violence, with Ahmedabad alone accounting for 200.

Mr Jadeja also claimed that the district authorities had succeeded in establishing order by organising peace marches in the violence-hit areas. At Bharuch, more than 50 maulvis and sants joined one such march organised by district collector Anju Sharma. Similar peace marches were taken out by Gandhians and social and voluntary organisations in Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Dhangadhra, Surendranagar, Kapadvanj and other violence-affected areas.



Narendra Modi

Shadow of politics on Gujarat arrest

FROM BASANT RAWAT

Ahmedabad, March 4: Allegations of political witch-hunt muddled the investigation into the Godhra carnage as it emerged that the arrested prime suspect had toppled the BJP's nominee to snatch the municipal president's post.

A tussle has broken out over the political affiliation of Mohammad Hussain Kolota, who was arrested yesterday and remanded in 10 days' police custody today. The Congress today denied reports that Kolota was a partyman.

Senior leader Kamal Nath said Kolota, Godhra municipality president, had no links with the Congress. "As a matter of fact, he fought against the Congress and won as an Independent. It can be verified in the gazette," Nath said.

An advocate by profession, 45-year-old Kolota was emerging as one of the most powerful leaders of Godhra.

A measure of his influence was on display when he contested the municipal election as an Independent and defeated the candidates of both the Congress and the BJP.

Ten months ago, Kolota pulled off a coup in the municipality, overthrowing BJP leader Raju Darji as president. The no-confidence motion — the first such against a sitting president in Godhra — was supported by the Congress.

A grateful Kolota then started calling himself a Congressman, party leaders said.

The police said they have evidence showing his involvement in the train carnage but have not made it public so far. Some residents of Godhra said they were not aware of Kolota having a criminal history.

Godhra MLA Rajendrasingh Patel said Kolota was being victimised because he ousted the BJP from the municipality's leadership. He alleged that Darji was instrumental in getting Kolota arrested.

"It was Darji who gave the police his name, after which Kolota had to go underground," the MLA added.

Darji denied the charge. "It (the ouster) is an old story. I had nothing to do with the arrest. He was identified by railway officials," Darji said.

Kolota was arrested from his friend's house where he was hiding and virtually surrendered when the police found him on the fourth floor of the house.

The BJP insisted that Kolota was affiliated to the Congress and claimed that four councillors arrested earlier were Congress members. "Because the arrest in the massacre is too embarrassing for the Congress, it has disowned him," said a senior BJP leader.

THE TELEGRAPH

5 MAR 2002

Opposition accuses Gujarat Govt. of 'abject failure'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 4. Putting up a united front, prominent Opposition leaders today asked the Gujarat Government to curb violence in the State and called upon the Centre to fulfil its bounden duty of providing protection to the people there.

Expressing concern that violence was still continuing, a meeting of the Opposition leaders criticised the State Government for its "abject" failure to protect the lives and property of the people.

"We are of the view that without the criminal negligence, if not connivance of the State Government, such dastardly events could not have happened," they said in a statement.

The meeting was held at the initiative of the Congress presi-

dent and Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, and attended by the former Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar, Somnath Chatterjee of the CPI (M), G.M. Banatwala of the Muslim League, Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad of the RJD, Ramji Lal Suman of the Samajwadi Party and representatives of other parties.

It was the first meeting of Opposition leaders convened by Ms. Gandhi during the Budget session of Parliament.

At a press conference later, Mr. Chatterjee said the country was passing through a "very serious crisis" in the face of the continuing violence in Gujarat.

He alleged that the Army was not effectively deployed and demanded "action" from the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee.

"What is the good of the

Prime Minister saying that the incidents are shameful? Why does he not take action? He does not seem to have even pulled up his party's Chief Minister in Gujarat," the veteran CPI(M) leader said.

He accused the BJP-VHP combine of indulging in a "sinister campaign" against the Opposition by spreading the false propaganda that it had not condemned the attack on the Sabarmati Express in Godhra.

"All parties had condemned the Godhra incident. No violence is justifiable."

The deputy leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha, Shivraj Patil, said the violence had spread to newer areas and even in curfew-bound areas, arrangements had not been made for the distribution of food and relief.

"The ghastly incidents that have happened in Gujarat have not only brought shame on our country but will also affect its unity and integrity," the joint statement said.

The parties demanded that relief camps with adequate security be immediately set up in all disturbed areas and that those affected be provided with medicines, food and other necessities.

They appealed to the people to maintain peace and communal harmony, which alone could promote national integration.

"People should not be provoked by the instigation provided by policies and actions of the obscurantist forces, masquerading as political parties," they said.

Ms. Gandhi also wrote to Mr. Vajpayee, urging him to arrange for the visit by an all-party delegation to the affected areas at the earliest.

She said that at the meeting today, the Opposition leaders had expressed the need for such a delegation to assess the situation.

Meanwhile, the Congress spokesman, S. Jaipal Reddy, denied that the arrested municipal councillor of Godhra, Mohammad Hussain Kalatha, belonged to the Congress.

The councillor had contested as an Independent and defeated the Congress candidate in the civic polls. "It is a big lie being spread by the BJP's propaganda apparatus," he added.

Dismissal of Modi Govt. sought

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 4. As many as two dozen Muslim organisations have demanded the dismissal of the Narendra Modi Government in Gujarat and handing over of riot-affected areas in the State to the Army.

They have demanded stringent action against the perpetrators of the Godhra train massacre and the post-Godhra carnage in the State.

Urging the Centre to institute an inquiry by a sitting judge of the Supreme Court into the se-

quence of events, including the role of the State Government, the organisations said immediate relief should be given to all the riot survivors. Alleging the involvement of the VHP, Bajrang Dal and other Sangh Parishad outfits in the violence, they demanded a ban on the outfits.

The demands were made by the Shahi Imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid, the Jamiat-Ulema-e-Hind, the All India Milli Council, the Jamat-e-Islami Hind, the Jamat Ahle Hadees, the Muslim Majlis, the Muslim Muttahida Mahaz, the National Develop-

ment Front, the All India Qaumi Tanzeem, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board and others.

In a statement, Karan Singh, Rajya Sabha member, who is also the chairman of the Temple of Understanding, appealed to all communities in Gujarat and elsewhere to shun violence and return to the path of sanity, dialogue and communal harmony.

"Recent events in Gujarat in which hundreds of innocent men, women and children have lost their lives in the lurid flames of religious hatred have not only shocked the entire na-

tion, but have also gravely damaged our image around the world," Dr. Singh said demanding that all steps be taken to apprehend the guilty and restore peace and harmony in Gujarat.

PTI reports:

The Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid, Syed Abdullah Bukhari, who led a demonstration by leaders of the various Muslim outfits, alleged that the "Gujarat Government, under Modi, is terrorising people. He should be arrested under POTO and President's Rule imposed".

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THE HINDU

5 MAR 2002

Godhra civic chief arrested

George briefs PM; Carnage is a blot on nation, says Advani

Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: Four days after the carnage in which 58 passengers on board the Ahmedabad-bound Sabarmati Express were burnt alive, the police arrested the president of the Godhra municipality, Mohammad Husain Abdul Rahim Kalota.

The arrest came immediately after Union home minister L.K. Advani's visit here on Sunday.

Kalota, who became president of the Godhra municipality seven months back, was picked up by the police along with Shiraz Abdullah Jamesha, a local transporter, anti-terrorist squad DIG Vipul Vijoy Singh told TNN on Sunday.

Mr Advani denied that the police had played a passive role in the communal riots in Ahmedabad and other places. The police had resorted to effective firing to check the violence that had erupted in the wake of the attack on the Sabarmati Express, he said, adding that 77 deaths had been reported in police firing in the state so far.

He said that the army was also rushed within 24 hours of the first reported incident of violence to assist the local administration. He termed the opposition's demand that the state be handed over to the army as an irresponsible statement, particularly when the army had been positioned to protect the borders.

The Godhra police said that at least 22 persons—including Salim Abdul Ghaffar Shaikh and Abdul Rehman Abdul Majid Dhantiya alias Kanu-Katiya alias Jamhurrhiyo, who were corporators in the Godhra municipality—were arrested earlier in relation to the carnage. Special inspector-general of police P.P. Aagja, who is investigating the train killings, declined to give details, but confirmed that the offenders had been booked for murder, arson and under the prevention of terrorism

ordinance.

Mr Advani joined Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in condemning the communal violence, saying that it was definitely a blot on the nation. The communal flare-up in Gujarat had spoiled the good track record of the coalition government at the Centre, he said.

State officials told Mr Advani that at least four councillors of the Godhra municipality had been arrested along with some 80 people in connection with the attack on Sabarmati Express. Mr Advani said he was not aware of their party affiliation.

Mr Advani also said that the state government had assured him that the administration would make all-out efforts to restore peace and protect each and every citizen, irrespective of his caste or creed.

Defence minister George Fernandes, who had visited different areas of Gujarat in the last couple of days to oversee the deployment of the army, left for the strife-torn state again on Sunday evening.

Officials said that Mr Fernandes, who returned to New Delhi from Ahmedabad late on Saturday night, briefed the Prime Minister on the situation before travelling back to Gujarat.

According to sources, Mr Fernandes was unhappy with the way the situation had been handled by the Narendra Modi ministry and felt that the state government was not cooperating with the army.

Meanwhile, fresh violence was reported from Ahmedabad and Bhavnagar on Sunday, with the police opening fire to disperse rioting mobs. No deaths were reported from these areas.

Mobs set afire shops and trucks on the highway in the Ranika area of Bhavnagar, which continued to remain tense throughout the day.

The official death toll in the communal violence since Wednesday has gone up to 485.



Home minister L.K. Advani enquires about the health of an injured person at the Civil Hospital in Ahmedabad on Sunday.

Fresh flare-up shatters Ahmedabad calm ✓

Violence spreads to rural areas

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE & AGENCIES

GANDHINAGAR, March 2. — The uneasy calm that prevailed in Ahmedabad was shattered when seven people were killed today.

The communal violence spread to rural areas of Mehsana, Vadodara and Godhra. Officials put the death toll at 320.

Ahmedabad was almost back to normal during the day, but three

people were burnt to death in Maninagar in the evening. Two people were killed in a factory blaze in the Vatar industrial area. A person was burnt to death in Sherkotra while another succumbed to injuries sustained during riots yesterday.

Thirty-five people were killed in Mehsana and Vadodara early today.

Twenty-nine people were burnt to death in their houses at Sardarpura in Mehsana district, 60 km from Ahmedabad. Forty people injured in mob violence were admitted to Mehsana Hospital. Seven houses were destroyed.

In Vadodara, 10 people working in

a bakery were burnt alive by a 200-strong mob. Six people were injured. Two tempos, two motorcycles and half-a-dozen bicycles belonging to the bakery-owner and his labourers, who were reportedly from Uttar Pradesh, were set ablaze. With the killings, the toll in Vadodara has risen to 25. The fire in the bakery "could be due to labour problem", Mr Narendra Modi said.

Two British nationals of Indian origin are feared killed and another injured. The dead have been identified as Mohammed Afzal Hai and Yusuf Bhai. The injured, Mohammed Imran Bhai, has been admitted to a hospital. On their way to Agra, they were attacked near Himmatnagar yesterday.

Near Godhra, eight people of a family were burnt to death in Panchmahal district. A report from Surat said two people were killed and five injured. Three people were killed in Bhavnagar. A person died in police firing in Halol and another was killed by a mob in Lunawada.

Star News off air

GANDHINAGAR, March 2. — The transmission of *Star News* in the state was today indefinitely suspended under provisions of the Cable Act. The network has, during its coverage of the riots, identified the two warring communities. — SNS

■ Editorial: Lunacy abounds! page 8

■ See GUJARAT: page 10

RSS brokers PM-sant talks

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 2. — The RSS has succeeded in arranging a meeting between sadhus and Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr LK Advani. The meeting will be held in a day or two and a solution to the Ayodhya issue is expected.

(The VHP has also called a meeting in Delhi with the Ram Janambhoomi Trust tomorrow, turst convener Ramchandra Paramhans said in

Ayodhya today, adds PTI. The VHP spokesman, Mr Veereshwar Dwivedi, demanded a written assurance from the Prime Minister that government allow the organisation to conduct its 15 March programme.

(Following diversion of Ayodhya-bound trains, kar sevaks from West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra failed to reach there. Authorities have begun transporting out the kar sevaks already there.)

In Kolkata, Mr

Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee said steps were being taken to stop kar sevaks from leaving for Ayodhya.

After meeting Mr Vajpayee and the home minister, the RSS joint general secretary, Mr Madan Das Devi, said: "We are here to mediate and help resolve the Ayodhya problem to the satisfaction of both sides."

The religious leaders are expected to be given a warm welcome by the Prime Minister.

■ See RSS: page 10

RSS:

(Continued from page 1)

Lack of a cordial response from Mr Vajpayee during their last meeting is said to have annoyed the sadhus. It is expected that the agreement would include continuance of the 100-day yagna and a "symbolic" movement of pillars but no actual construction. The government might consider handing over a portion of the 67 acres acquired by the government to the Ram Janambhoomi Trust.

The government is finding it difficult to live up to its claim — court will be asked to expedite the settlement of the temple issue. Sources said when the Centre last time approached the Allahabad High Court, the court did not accept the government's contention saying it was not a party in the case.

In Bangalore, Mrs Sonia Gandhi warned the government against making any concessions to the VHP on the temple issue. Life was thrown out of gear in the Jammu province in response to a bandh called by the VHP in protest against the Godhra killings.

Mr Vajpayee today assured a delegation of Muslim organisations that special steps would be taken to ensure protection of pilgrims returning from the Haj.

Gujarat: Curfew relaxed in some cities

(Continued from page 1)

Curfew was relaxed in some parts of Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Dhoraji, Kadi, Amod, Mahsa and Anand.

Another Army brigade has arrived in the state. Reacting to charges of delay in the Army deployment, the chief minister, Mr Narendra Modi, said: "These are baseless charges. The Army was deployed 24 hours after the riots began...The situation in the riot-hit areas is under control."

"Police had fired 1,031 rounds and 1,614 tear-gas shells in the past 24 hours," he added. Forty-seven people have so far died in police firing.

The state Congress demanded that Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot, Nadiad, Bhavnagar and Jamnagar be handed over to the Army. Congress leaders boycotted an all-party meeting called by the chief minister and staged a dharna outside Mr

Modi's residence.

Mr George Fernandes visited Godhra, Vadodara and Rajkot to assess the situation. Mr LK Advani is expected to reach here tomorrow.

In Rajasthan, a few shops were torched as two groups clashed in Udaipur, witnesses said. Curfew was later imposed on the town.

A few houses and shops were reportedly set on fire by arsonists, who had come from Gujarat, at Kotda village near the Gujarat border. However, the situation in Kishengarh-Madan Ganj and Simanwara towns in Ajmer and Dungarpur districts of Rajasthan has improved.

The Andhra Pradesh chief minister, Mr N Chandrababu Naidu, called up Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr Advani and urged them to take adequate steps to contain violence in Gujarat. An emergency meeting of the TDP politburo was convened to discuss the situation in Gujarat.

THE HINDU

1992



Rioters in an Ahmedabad street on Friday. Troops arrived in the State on Friday to crush religious violence that has killed more than 180 people in two days, the worst communal bloodshed in a decade.

REUTERS PHOTO

Baroda cops join rioters

Viju B
Baroda, March 1

"EVERYTHING IS normal," said the officer manning the Baroda police control room. Outside, the city was burning through the day. If what the officer said was true, then one would have to accept as "normal" random police firing at people offering Friday prayers.

Police shot at Muslims as they emerged from their homes for Friday prayers at Memon Colony, Yakubpura and Makarpura. Most of them could not reach mosques before they were shot at. And as their friends tried to take them to hospital, crowds of VHP supporters arrived to finish the job.

This correspondent ran for his life when a 20-strong mob descended on the SSG Hospital, armed with iron rods. I did not know where I ducked for cover, until the shouts of *Maaro, maaro* (Kill, kill) had died down. I then found myself hiding in a corner of the hospital.

An Army column that should have reached Baroda this morning rolled in only late in the evening. And through the day, Muslims were hunted in the city.

Colonel Umbarbhai watched helplessly as a mob burnt his home this morning, while 50 policemen stood quietly. The old soldier happens to have a son serving the Army at the border. Policemen shot at young Ismail as he left home to offer prayers at the mosque in Memon colony. As the injured turned up at SSG Hospital for treatment, they found incensed crowds waiting for them. Muslims, easily recognisable in their caps and their beards, were picked out for attacks in the hospital premises.



A policeman points his gun at rioters in Ahmedabad.

REUTERS PHOTO

'We were outnumbered'

Ahmedabad, March 1

PRASHANT CHANDRA Pande, Ahmedabad Police Commissioner, admitted on Thursday that his men were not prepared for the flare-up in the city following the burning of 58 *kar sevaks* in Godhra in Gujarat on Wednesday.

Pande said that his force found itself outnumbered. The police were not able to man the suburban areas properly, he said. "It's not possible to man such a big area. At the best at every point one can provide three or four policemen. And when there is a crowd of 10,000 at one place, I can visualise what must be the position of my policemen," the commissioner explained.

The police also lacked proper communication equipment making it difficult to rush reinforcements to sensitive areas, he said. "My head hangs in shame," he said expressing distress at the unbridled chaos in Ahmedabad.

IANS

Ringed in by a killer mob

Vinay Menon
Ahmedabad, March 1

AS DAWN breaks over Gulberg Society at Chamanpura, a predominantly Hindu locality in central Ahmedabad, it is not difficult to see why the place has earned the notoriety of being the bloodiest spot of communal mob fury in the city.

Outside the house of former Congress MP and High Court lawyer Ehsan Jaffrey lies the smouldering arm of what appeared to be a two-year-old child, hacked from the shoulder. Nearby are two bodies charred beyond recognition in a heap of mangled steel and tyres. At last count the police say they "suspected" 25 persons to have been burnt alive here. Residents swear it should be at least 50.

The 250-odd residents of Gulberg Society lived a cocooned life. An eight-foot high wall surrounded it from all four sides, guarding the Muslim families from the Hindu majority. The 'seclusion' came as a boon for the bloodthirsty mob. "Practically every Muslim family in Chamanpura took shelter behind the high walls of Gulberg Society making it easy for the VHP-led mob to focus their attack on a single place," says Syed

Ban VHP: Seer

THE SHANKARACHARYA of Govardhanpuri Jagadguru Adhokshjanand Teerth on Friday condemned the violence in Gujarat as "State terrorism" and demanded a ban on the VHP and arrest of its leaders under the National Security Act. "The attacks were carried out with direct assistance of VHP office-bearers and the police," the seer said.

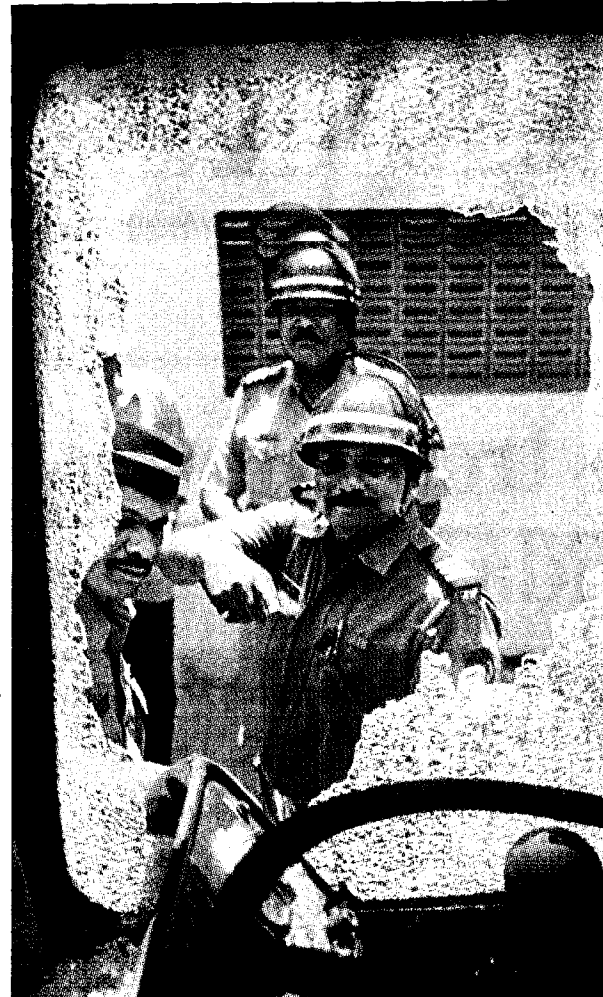
PTI, New Delhi

Fakir Sheikh, a survivor

"Even the Police Commissioner visited Jaffrey at his residence," recalls Sheikh.

Less than two hours after the commissioner left the mob crashed through rear wall using flaming gas cylinders. What provoked them "beyond control" were the eight shots Jaffrey fired in self-defence.

"The women and children were rushed to Jaffrey's house and made to lie low on the floor," says Mohd Rafiq, another resident. "Others were hiding at the society's mosque. But the mob dragged everyone out and began beating us. A couple of girls taking shelter in a bedroom were molested."



Police inspect a bus damaged by activists in Mumbai on Friday.

AFP PHOTO

Saffron crowds target mosques at Kaithal

HT Correspondent
Kaithal, March 1

SHIV SENA, VHP and Bajrang Dal activists pulled down a mosque, damaged two other mosques and at least four 'mazaars' of 'Pir' in Kaithal, where the bandh was complete today. Police attempts to check the rioters were feeble and ineffectual.

Mobs set fire to a Muslim priest's home, looted a shop owned by a Muslim and another belonging to a Hindu. A police inspector received serious head injuries in the riots. The administration swung into action only after the damage had been done. In the nearby town of Kalayat, a violent mob demolished a major portion of a mosque before setting fire to it.

A mob marched in procession in the morning, brandishing unsheathed swords, iron rods, sticks and other weapons and forced the shopkeepers to pull down their shutters. When they reached a mosque located near Hindu Senior Secondary School, they barged into the building and started pulling it down. Hundreds of residents watched the protesters go up the dome and demolish it and other parts of the mosque.

The district administration made only some feeble attempts to check the mobs. Two or three policemen tried to stop the demolition, but a posse of policemen stood at a distance, watching helplessly. The mob, having demolished a major part of the religious place, torched it.

The violent mob also demolished a timber shop outside the mosque. Ironically, the shopkeeper happens to be a Hindu.

Govt to blame for late Army action

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 1

THE GUJARAT Government was responsible for the delayed deployment of the Army in the riot-hit areas on Friday. The Army, which was asked to move in about 7 pm on Thursday, has denied that it took too long to react.

The troops, airlifted to Ahmedabad by 2 am on Friday, were supposed to be de-

ployed by dawn, but the Army had to wait because transport had not been made available. Eventually, the Army got into the act around 11 am.

"Our first priority was to airlift our men in IL-76 heavy-lift aircraft. We had to depend upon the civil administration for transport and other logistical arrangements. The support was not adequate. The moment we got transport, we swung into

action," a senior officer at Army Headquarters said.

"A recee party reached Ahmedabad on Thursday for the pre-deployment drill. The main body of troops (of the first brigade) reached the city after midnight. Operational planning started on Thursday night itself."

"A hotline was immediately set up between the Directorate-General Military Operations at Army Headquarters in New Delhi and

the Ahmedabad local area headquarters," he said.

Troops had to be moved in from outside because the local formations are deployed on the Indo-Pak border. The 11 Infantry Division, which is part of the Jodhpur-based 12 (Desert) Corps, is deployed at Ahmedabad.

Local formations have their areas of responsibility earmarked, in the event of the Army being called out in aid of civil authorities.

Partial response to VHP's Bharat bandh

HT Correspondents & PTI
New Delhi, March 1

THE DAY-LONG nation-wide bandh called by the VHP to protest Wednesday's killings of 'ramsevaks' at Godhra today evoked mixed response.

In the Capital, however, the bandh failed to evoke any response. Elaborate security arrangements were in place in the city and east Delhi areas. In Mumbai, the bandh partially affected suburban trains as VHP workers sat on the tracks at Malad, Borivali, Kandivalli, Grant Road, Thane and Chembur.

Shops burnt in Thane

POLICE BURST teargas shells and resorted to lathi-charge today to disperse a mob which set on fire several shops in Murbad,

Thane, and pelted stones at the cops during the bandh. The shops, in the heart of the town, belonged to a minority community, police said. Fire tenders were rushed from Ulhasnagar, Kalyan and Dombivli to Murbad to douse the fire.

Thackeray caution

THE SHIV Sena has extended moral support to the day-long bandh called by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad but party supremo Bal Thackeray said the saikins will not participate in it. He described the attack on Sabarnati Express as "blood chilling".

Rail traffic disrupted

RAIL TRAFFIC was disrupted for several hours on the Allahabad-Mughalsarai section of Northern

Railway after VHP activists squatted on the rail tracks today, throwing the rail movement out of gear for more than four hours.

2 shot in Aligarh

TWO PERSONS were shot dead in Aligarh during the bandh early this morning. District officials said that the two incidents had no link with the VHP-sponsored bandh. Police have been deployed in all the sensitive areas across the district, District Magistrate Arun Singhal said.

Stray violence in Andhra

THE BANDH was only partially successful in Hyderabad, but sporadic violence was reported from parts of Andhra Pradesh. Police fired in the air in the old city of Hyderabad when a mob attacked

a police station. Ten people were injured brick-batting. Shops were closed in some areas. Similar incidents were also reported from Nizamabad, Adilabad, Cudapah and Karnool districts.

I killed in Kerala

THE VHP-SPONSORED hartal claimed one life in the State. Lakshmi, an employee of the Life Insurance Corporation, died after her jeep, which was attacked in Kazhakootam near Thiruvananthapuram, fell into a roadside gorge. Other than this incident, the state witnessed no untoward incident.

Karnataka peaceful

THE BANDH was largely peaceful in Karnataka. Stray incidents of violence were witnessed in

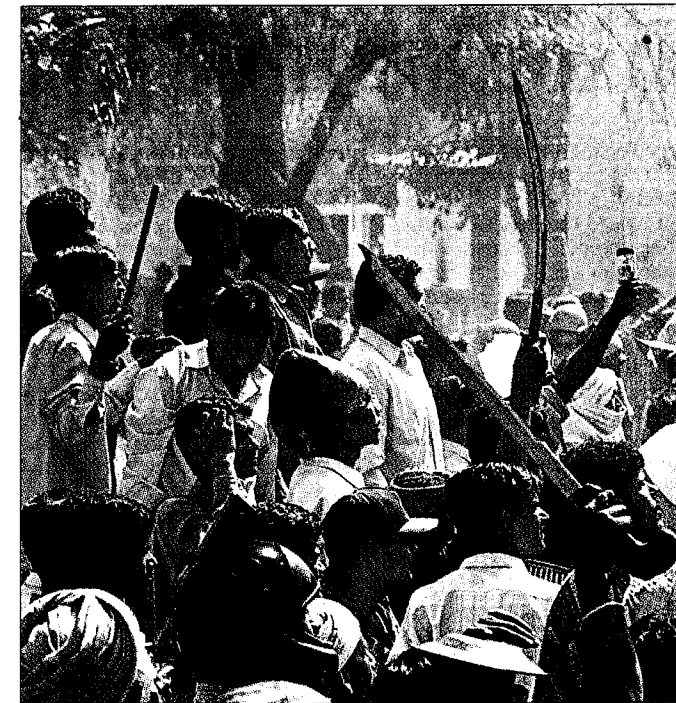
Hubli and Kolar. But the administration took no chances and beefed up security all over the State.

Partial response in Assam

WHILE SHOPS, business establishments and market establishments remained open some private vehicles remained off the roads in Assam. Some shops in VHP dominated pockets in the city however downed their shutters.

VHP men held in Orissa

NEARLY 450 VHP activists were arrested during the bandh today. Police said more forces were being deployed at mosques and other sensitive areas. But by and large the state remained peaceful.



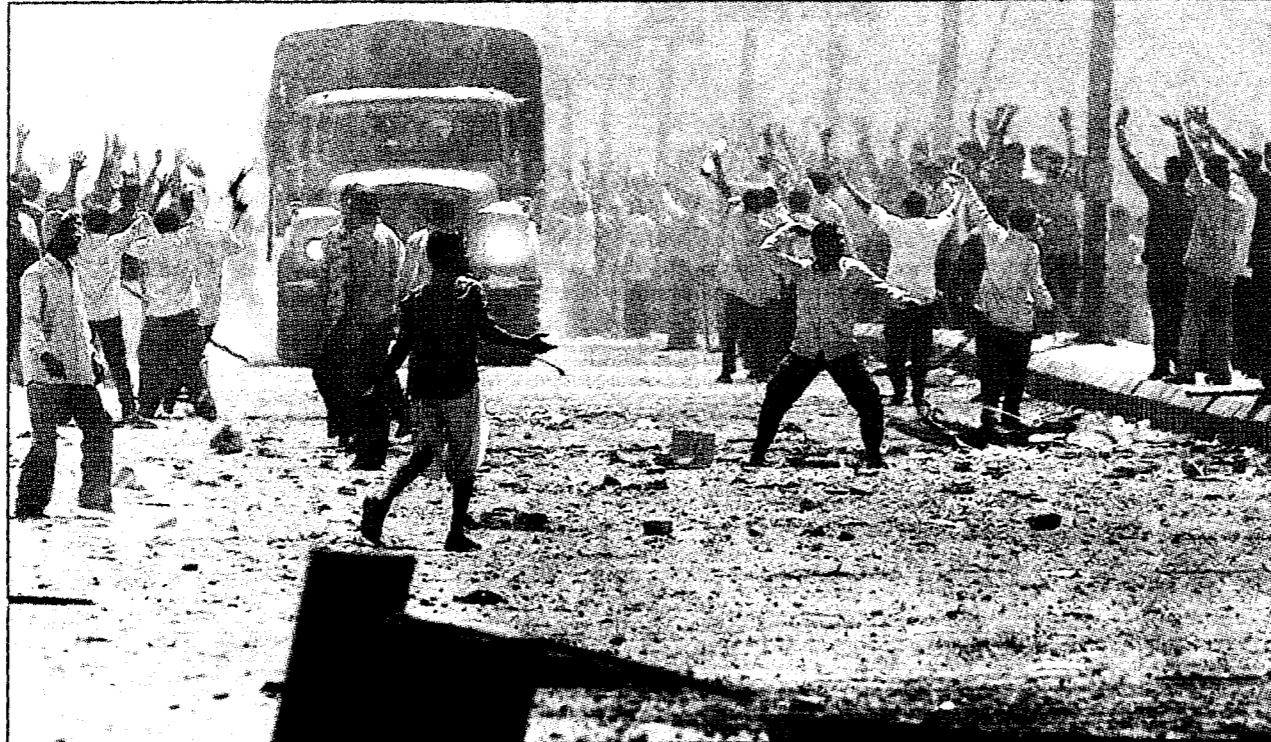
A mob brandishes swords in Ahmedabad.

AFP PHOTO

Mobs rule Gujarat streets, toll 200

Reuters

Kalpit Bhachech



A rioting mob jeers at a police truck on patrol in Ahmedabad as (right) a policeman takes aim across a road littered with stones in the Milat Nagar locality of Ahmedabad on Friday.

Rioters defy army in Ahmedabad

Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: Neither the army nor the shoot-at-sight orders issued to the police could control the mob frenzy in Ahmedabad on Friday as the city witnessed a total collapse of the law and order machinery, taking a heavy toll on human lives and on the government's credibility.

Complete lawlessness prevailed in Gujarat's largest city of 55 lakhs as mobs ruled the streets in almost all the curfew-bound areas, killing people, burning shops and houses and fighting pitched battles.

There was little sign of the presence of security forces as the toll in the communal carnage in the last

two days crossed the 200 mark in Gujarat, with Ahmedabad alone accounting for almost 165 deaths. Violence spread to new areas of the city as mobs armed with petrol bombs, swords and firearms roamed freely for hours after about 1,000 army jawans had been deployed.

Home secretary K. Nityanandam said the army staged flag marches in some of the badly affected areas of Ahmedabad on Friday. He said the troops had been flown in to Ahmedabad early on Friday. A strong contingent of central paramilitary forces, including the Central Reserve Police Force and Border Security Force, was likely to arrive soon, he added.

About 1,200 people have been arrested in the state. Mr Nityanandam also said a mob killed a police constable and set his motorcycle on fire in front of the Hardasnagar police outpost in the Bapunagar area early on Friday. There was an escalation of violence even in Vadodara, where the death toll is about 11—the victims were either stabbed or burnt to death. Elsewhere in the 21 towns and cities of Gujarat where curfew has been imposed, things were relatively quiet. Army columns have taken up position in Rajkot, Vadodara and Godhra.

Officially, the statewide death toll is 136, including 119 in Ahmedabad. Crowds burnt six persons alive

near the Dehrol railway station, about 50 km from Godhra, on Friday morning. The victims were walking along the highway when a mob accosted them, doused them with kerosene and burnt them alive.

There was no sign of the violence abating in Ahmedabad, where nine army columns were deployed just before noon. Most of the killings overnight took place on the fringes of the city, in areas like Naroda, Bapunagar and Meghaninagar, and continued until well past midnight on Thursday. The motorcade of Union defence minister George Fernandes was stoned at Naroda and Bapunagar on Friday afternoon.

65 killed in single attack

By Radha Sharma and Sanjay Pandey
Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: At least 65 people were massacred by a mob in the Naroda-Patia area on the outskirts of the city on Thursday evening.

"There was a mob of about 5,000 people..our house was stormed and I was pulled out along with my parents. They doused us with petrol and set us on fire..my parents are dead," wept 15-year-old Shah Jahan as blood dripped from her burnt face.

"In a few moments they shattered my entire world," said Mohammad Farooq, who lost his wife and three children in the attack. His other three children—aged ten, 11 and 12—are in hospital with 50 to 70 per cent burns.

Survivors said the entire locality was burnt down within minutes. So far, at least 58 bodies have been recovered. Most of those killed were women and children.

Stray incidents mar bandh in city

Times News Network

MUMBAI: Going strictly by figures, the 12-hour bandh called by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad on Friday did not disfigure Mumbai beyond 19 officially reported cases of stone pelting at BEST buses and 13 rail blocks. Also, two bogies of a 'ladies' special' train were derailed by a mob in Kandivli.

But going by the deserted streets, empty offices and downed shop shutters, the bandh was a near-total success.

Scars of the '93 riots still fresh in mind, Mumbai refused to be drawn into the throes of violence even as bulletins brought in updates of arson and killings in Gujarat.

Stray incidents were reported in other parts of Maharashtra as well. The bandh triggered violence in Murbad in Thane district and Kadvegaon in Kolhapur district, where mobs tried to attack local masjids, deputy chief minister Chhagan Bhujbal said on Friday.

► City jumps onto bandhwagon, Page 3

VHP pushes for hard bargain on Ayodhya

By Smita Gupta
Times News Network

NEW DELHI: A majority in the Sangh Parivar—whether in the RSS itself or in the BJP and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad—want the Godhra carnage to be delinked from the VHP build-up in Ayodhya.

As for Ramjanmabhoomi, VHP leaders say it should be addressed separately, and that the government must go to the dharmacharyas and give them "written assurance" permitting them to place the pillars on the acquired site as the culmination of the year-long *purnahuti yagya* on March 15. Only then will it be willing to postpone announcing the precise date of temple construction.

"Why does the government want to fall into the opposition trap and use Gujarat to cow down the VHP?" asked an RSS source.

Several BJP MPs, too, said they resented the curbs placed on kar sevaks entering Ayodhya and expressed unhappiness with the appeals of the Prime Minister and the Union home minister to scale down the stir in view of the communal conflagration in Gujarat.

The BJP leadership, taken aback

at the resentment in the party, the Sangh and the VHP to its apparent 'capitulation', tried hard on Friday to regain some ground with its own people.

On Thursday, Mr Vajpayee and Mr Advani asked the RSS to "mediate" with the VHP on its behalf, and later HRD minister Murli Manohar Joshi and BJP MP Balasaheb Apte met RSS leaders to try and work out a formula. RSS chief Sudershan has also been in touch with some VHP leaders.

One formula that is reported to be discussed is that the law ministry should request the supreme court to permit a part of the acquired land to be handed over to the VHP before March 12. While the publicly-stated priority is to check communal violence in Gujarat, BJP ministers are apparently having to prove their credentials first with their own cadre.

On Friday, Mr Advani came to parliament with a prepared statement which would set some "doubts" at rest. But when he was not allowed to make it, he called an impromptu press briefing at which he gave the details of the Godhra carnage without any reference to the Ayodhya issue.

Ambanis plan to

MUSLIM ESTABLISHMENTS SET ABLAZE, MOBS HAVE A FIELD DAY, ARMY CALLED IN

140 killed as Gujarat bandh turns violent

J. S. Gujrat

By Manas Dasgupta

109-1
1/3

AHMEDABAD, FEB. 28. At least 140 people were killed, 60 of them burnt alive in two housing colonies here today, as mob frenzy reached its crescendo during the "Gujarat bandh" called by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and supported by the ruling BJP in protest against Wednesday's torching of the Sabarmati Express.

At least 30 others were killed in police firing, stabbing and other incidents in different parts of the city while the casualty in other cities and towns in the State was put at over 50.

Shops and business establishments belonging to Muslims were targeted by mobs. About 40 were feared killed when 15 houses in "Gulmarg" Society in Meghaninagar locality here were set afire. At least 20 people were feared trapped in a building set ablaze in Naroda industrial area.

Among the deceased in the Gulmarg Society carnage was the former Congress member of the Lok Sabha, Ehsan Jafri, and his entire family. The Home Secretary, K. Nityanandam,

confirmed the torching of the Gulmarg Society, but said he was not sure if Mr. Jafri was among the victims.

Police have recovered some 20 bodies from the Society and at least 15 more are believed to be inside the burning houses. At Naroda, efforts are being made to put off the fire before the recovery of bodies could start.

The authorities said the toll in the day's orgy of violence in Ahmedabad alone could be at least 90. The number of cases of looting and arson, particularly of the minority shops and business establishments, was officially put at 118 in Ahmedabad but the authorities admitted that they had lost count.

The authorities, for obvious reasons, refused to confirm the burning of a mosque in Surat city, the attack on the Islamic Study Centre in Baroda and the torching of the Waqf Board office in the old secretariat building in Gandhinagar. But eyewitness accounts confirmed the incidents.

The Army units, frantically called by the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, as the situation

seemed to slip out of hand, started arriving in Ahmedabad and are likely to be deployed in the city on Friday.

At least five people were killed in Virangam and four in Baroda where the house of a leading Muslim social activist was attacked. Six were killed in Derol town near Godhra. Till evening, police fired 46 rounds in Ahmedabad, in which at least 10 persons were believed to have been killed. The toll in the torching of the Sabarmati Express, meanwhile, had risen to 58 with the recovery of the body of a child late last night.

An indefinite curfew has been clamped in 26 cities and towns in the State, including parts of Ahmedabad, Surat, Baroda, Rajkot, Nadiad, Anand and Kaira in addition to the indefinite curfew in force in Godhra since Wednesday. The skyline of Ahmedabad and Baroda was filled with black smoke emanating from the burnt shops and cabins, discarded tyres to create road blockades as well as dozens of State road transport and city municipal service buses set afire by the miscreants.

For the first time in many years, the response to the bandh call was almost total in all cities with not even a single shop or roadside cabin, petrol pump or commercial establishment open. Hooligans forced the closure of most of the State and Central Government offices in Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar and other cities. All schools and colleges, cinemas and other establishments remained closed. Even the cable television operators, "under instructions" from the VHP, were forced to suspend telecast of all entertainment and sports channels, allowing only the news channels to function during the day.

The hooligans indulging in looting and arson had a field day with police either conspicuous by their absence or, outnumbered by the attackers, looking the other way. Journalists and cameramen were also attacked at many places and their equipment damaged.

It was also perhaps for the first time that the capital city of Gandhinagar witnessed violence with groups of people attacking even the old secretariat

building housing the offices of many of the State Government-owned boards.

Several minority places of worship were made the specific target of the attacks. In Ahmedabad, a mausoleum in the middle of a road in Shahibagh locality, barely a few metres from the office of the city police commissioner was razed to the ground by the hooligans with the police vehicles passing by but refusing to intervene.

Mr. Modi, who described the train attack as a "terrorist-type" action, said the Government had ordered a judicial inquiry, by a retired judge of the Gujarat High Court. Mr. Modi said 80 people, including two local councillors of Godhra who were believed to be involved in the train attack and the owners of the two petrol pumps suspected to have supplied fuel to the attackers, had been arrested. Both the pumps have been sealed, he said and added that the Government would not hesitate to invoke POTO or the Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Act (PASA) against the Godhra attackers.



Arsonists take to the streets of Ahmedabad on Thursday in retaliation for the attack on the Sabarmati Express in Godhra on Wednesday. — AP



Smoke billows out of a building set alight by rioters in Ahmedabad on Thursday. Police used gunfire and teargas to control Hindus targeting Muslim-owned shops. — AFP

PM seeks RSS help

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, FEB. 28. The violence spreading from Gujarat today spurred the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to seek the help of the RSS to get the Vishwa Hindu Parishad to withdraw its temple construction plan in Ayodhya.

Although a defiant VHP rejected the Government plea and warned of reprisals (against the minorities) "throughout the country" in "response to Godhra", the RSS has promised to "mediate" between the Government and the VHP to help maintain law and order.

The Prime Minister's residence was the venue of a series of meetings this evening in connection with the rapidly spreading communal fire that was ignited yesterday at Godhra but which is widely seen as having been stoked by the VHP's decision to go ahead with the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya in utter disregard of the law. The Cabinet Committee on Security also met to review the implications of a communal carnage. It decided that the Army be asked to stand by in Gujarat.

Three senior RSS leaders met the Prime Minister, the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid met him separately,

and late in the evening a Congress delegation, led by the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, impressed upon Mr. Vajpayee the need to take immediate and firm action to stop the provocative VHP plan.

At the end of a 90-minute meeting this evening between Mr. Vajpayee and the three RSS leaders — the general secretary, Mohan Bhagwat, and the joint general secretaries, H.V. Seshadiri and Madan Das Devi — it was announced that the RSS would try and talk to the VHP leaders and the Prime Minister would also make another effort to talk to them as well as the 'sants' who had fixed March 15 as the date for starting temple construction. Mr. Vajpayee impressed upon the RSS the need to call off the VHP agitation and restore peace, explaining his Government's "obligations" in this regard. It seems that the RSS leaders virtually justified the VHP's position that the "undisputed" Government acquired land in Ayodhya could be handed over to the VHP-controlled trust "even within the parameters of the Supreme Court judgment, as later the RSS spokesperson, M.G. Vaidya, put it: "We have advised Mr. Vajpayee to speak to the 'sants' to defuse the situation."

Maharashtra tense as VHP calls for bandh

By Our Special Correspondent

MUMBAI, FEB. 28. Tension prevailed in Maharashtra as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad called for a state-wide general strike on Friday to protest against the Godhra train carnage on Wednesday.

While the RSS and the BJP have supported the "bandh", the latter's ally in the state, the Shiv Sena, decided to support it late in the evening after a prolonged discussion among its top brass.

The earlier stand of the Sena was to let the VHP enforce the "bandh" since it had given the call without consulting the Sena chief, Bal Thackeray.

"But the Shiv Sena would not actively participate in the 'bandh' and its activists would not join the VHP members in any picketing," said the Leader of the Opposition and senior Sena functionary, Narayan Rane.

Unlike the BJP, the Shiv Sena has been openly supporting the VHP's agitation. Mr. Thackeray passed the most caustic remarks against the Prime Minister for his appeal for the suspension of the agitation. "The Hindus should not get cowed down as if they were liv-

ing in Pakistan," he said.

The Nationalist Congress Party condemned the incident at Godhra. The party spokesman and former minister, Vasant Chavan, said that the killing of innocents could not be a way of protesting against the Ram mandir. "But the VHP should suspend its agitation in response to the Prime Minister's appeal," he said fearing that the violence could spread to Maharashtra and other parts of the country.

The Maharashtra Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Boards postponed Friday's exams to March 18 and March 16 respectively in view of the 'bandh', said an official press note.

Meanwhile, hundreds of VHP activists held protest meetings at different railway stations in Mumbai and elsewhere in the State to gather support for tomorrow's protest strike. The activists said that they would exempt essential services from the "bandh" but would not let shops and offices to open or allow private and public transport, including trains, to ply.

The Deputy Chief Minister, Chhagan Bhujbal, convened a meeting of the top police officers and reviewed the situation in the State. A Home Ministry

official said the police apprehended Godhra type attacks in the State and had taken preventive measures.

Gehlot seeks PM's intervention

PTI reports from Jaipur:

The Rajasthan Chief Minister, Ashok Gehlot, today asked the Prime Minister to intervene and stop the State leaderships of the BJP and the VHP from going ahead with tomorrow's "Rajasthan bandh" in protest against the Godhra killings.

In a letter to Mr. Vajpayee, Mr. Gehlot said the "bandh" could lead to communal disharmony in the State. Criticising the BJP, the Chief Minister said on the one hand the BJP-led NDA Government has asked the VHP to stop the Ayodhya stir and on the other, the party's State unit has called for a "bandh".

Call for Orissa bandh

The Orissa State units of the VHP and the Bajrang Dal today called for a 12-hour bandh tomorrow.

The bandh would commence at 6 a.m., a press release issued by the VHP state general secretary, Gouri Prasad Rath, and state coordinator of the Bajrang Dal, Bhuban Mohan Jena, said.

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90 die in Gujarat backlash

Statesman News Service
and Agencies

AHMEDABAD/NEW DELHI, Feb. 28. — Ninety people have been killed in communal violence across Gujarat following yesterday's attack on the Sabarmati Express at Godhra station.

About 40 people, including a former Congress MP, his wife and four family members, were burnt alive during riots in Ahmedabad today raising the death toll in the city to 74.

The city mayor, Mr Himmatsinh Patel, the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee spokesman, Mr Jayantilal Parmar, and Congress MLA Mr Narhari Amin confirmed the death of Mr Ehsan Jaffri (65) and his family members.

A mob surrounded the Chamanpura locality of Meghaninagar near the airport, enraged by rumours that four people were killed in firing from Jaffri's house, witnesses said. They set his house on fire. Police fired to disperse the mob, but they were outnumbered.

Six people died in police firing in Ahmedabad. The Army is expected to take up position in the city late tonight.

Curfew was imposed on 26 cities and towns as arson and

looting in various parts of the state marked the bandh called by the VHP. The organisation has called for an all India bandh tomorrow to protest against the Godhra incident. Describing the present governance as *Ravan rajya*, the VHP rejected Mr Vajpayee's appeal to suspend the temple movement saying



Mob fury: A vehicle in flames in Ahmedabad on Thursday. — AP/PTI

that the authority for this lay with the sants.

Meanwhile, at a meeting with a three-member RSS delegation at his residence, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee prevailed on the RSS to mediate and ensure that tension was brought down. "Both sides will make efforts to thrash out a solution. We'll speak to VHP leaders. Mr Vajpayee will also speak to them. Our immediate efforts

Turn to page 8

THE STATESMAN

FEB 28 2002

Gujarat backlash:

5r6 1/3 (Continued from page 1)

would be to maintain law and order across the country," the RSS joint general secretary, Mr Madan Das, said after the meeting, attended by RSS general secretaries, Mr HV Sheshadri and Mr Mohan Bhagwat, BJP president Mr Jana Krishnamurthy and Mr LK Advani.

The RSS chief, Mr KS Sudershan, held parleys with the VHP international working president, Mr Ashok Singhal, as part of the RSS's "mediatory efforts" to defuse the tension in Ayodhya and Gujarat. Violence spiralled out of control in Gujarat as hundreds of shops, hotels and other commercial establishments were burnt and looted. Many places of worship were razed to the ground in Ahmedabad and other cities in the state. The places under curfew include Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Vadodara, Godhra, Bharuch, Nadiad, Ankleshwar, Dahod, Himmatnagar, Anand, Disa, Palampur and Visnagar.

In Ahmedabad, curfew was imposed on seven police station areas as people with lathis and other weapons went on the rampage. In the city's Shaibaug area, a five-storeyed hotel was set on fire.

In Gandhinagar, the Waqf Board office was torched around noon. Half a dozen vehicles were set ablaze near the airport. A man was burnt in his truck on the Gandhinagar-Sarkhej highway. Two people were killed in police firing in Nadiad and Godhra. A report from Surat said a 35-year-old man was stabbed to death in the Salabatpura area of the city.

More than 700 people have been rounded up. Two Godhra councillors were arrested in connection with yesterday's attack on the Sabarmati Express.

Announcing a judicial inquiry into the Godhra incident, Mr Modi said: "The incident is like a type of terrorism... It was pre-planned. I don't want to comment on the links as the inquiry will establish that...I can fully understand the anger and resentment of the people against the inhuman incident.

However, most places in the state have remained peaceful despite the incident."

The state Assembly session has been postponed to 4 March.

The bodies of 34 victims of the Godhra carnage were identified and handed over to relatives. The rest of them were cremated at Gota village.

The Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid met the Prime Minister and reportedly condemned the Godhra incident.

A Congress delegation, led by Mrs Sonia Gandhi, tonight met the Prime Minister and demanded deployment of Army in Gujarat, strong action against the VHP and their proposed kar seva. The Left parties have called for a national unity day on 6 March.

The Uttar Pradesh government would persuade about 12,000 kar sevaks to move out of Ayodhya, while borders of Faizabad district have been sealed to discourage others from entering the city. Trains and buses will be re-routed to stop more people from entering Faizabad district.

Pakistan described as "preposterous" reports from India that Islamabad was involved in the Godhra incident. "The loss of life of innocent people is to be regretted at any place anywhere in the world.

It is the responsibility of the Indian government to look after the security of its people," the foreign office spokesman, Mr Aziz Ahmad, said.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has expressed concern over the torching of the Sabarmati Express, terming it as "a mindless act of violence."

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Mob attacks train in Gujarat, 55 killed

Vajpayee links Godhra incident to temple issue, Advani warns VHP of stern action

By Sajid Shaikh
Times News Network

GODHRA: At least 55 people, mostly Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) volunteers, were burnt alive and many others injured when the Ahmedabad-bound Sabarmati Express was set ablaze by a mob at Godhra junction on Wednesday morning. As news of the attack at Godhra—where shoot-at-sight orders have been issued—spread, violence broke out in Vadodara, Anand and Ahmedabad.

More trouble is feared on Thursday as the VHP has called for a statewide bandh and issued a 24-hour ultimatum to the government to bring all those involved in the Godhra attack to book.

The Gujarat government has ordered all schools closed on Thursday in view of the VHP-sponsored bandh. All the State Reserve Police companies have been called out and deployed in sensitive areas of the state. Chief minister Narendra Modi has rushed to Godhra.

The VHP volunteers were returning from Ayodhya with their families after participating in a religious ceremony for the construction of a Ram temple there when the attack took place. The deceased included 16 men, 25 women and 14 children.

Survivors said the train was first pelted with stones and petrol bombs at about 7.30 a.m., as it travelled for some distance from Godhra junction. Someone apparently pulled the chain to bring the train to a halt near Singal Falia, a notorious area of Godhra. A mob then rushed towards two coaches (S6 and S7), pelting stones. Once the windows were broken, they threw petrol bombs inside. Later, said survivors, the S6 coach was doused with petrol and diesel from outside and set on fire. In normal circumstances, a coach carries about 75 passengers, but the ill-fated coaches were carrying much more. VHP volunteers had booked three coaches for their journey.

There are conflicting reports

about how the violence started. One version is that the VHP activists had raised provocative slogans at the railway station and misbehaved with some washerwomen who tried to board the train to go to Anand to wash clothes in the Mahi river. Another version is that the attack was unprovoked. The mob, incited by fiery speeches at a place of worship, was waiting to pounce on the train, knowing that VHP activists would be on board. A police official claimed that residents of Singal Falia had been informed that the kar sevaks on the train had attacked a place of worship at Dahod.

Following the attack on the train, the police had to open fire and lob teargas shells in Godhra to dis-

perse crowds indulging in sporadic incidents of violence, loot and arson. A 17-year-old boy was killed in the firing. A curfew has been clamped in the town. Provision stores, garages and a truck were set on fire near Singal Falia.

In Vadodara, one person was stabbed to death and two others were beaten up with sticks as a crowd waiting at the railway station for the Sabarmati Express went berserk on Wednesday afternoon. Brandishing

sticks, pipes, tridents and daggers publicly, the mob swore to avenge the Godhra incident. The condition of one of those beaten up, a 65-year-old man, is said to be critical.

The trouble arose in Anand when the Sabarmati Express reached there. Four persons trying to board the train were attacked by a group. One of them, a 60-year-old man, succumbed to stab injuries.

In Ahmedabad, emotional scenes were witnessed at the railway station when the Sabarmati Express arrived at about 4.45 p.m. A crowd which left the station raising slogans later indulged in violence at several places. Buses were set on fire in Vasma, Odhav, Leelanagar, Parashvanath township and Bapunagar.

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Volunteers help firemen fight the blaze in the Sabarmati Express near Godhra station on Wednesday (top). Survivors recount what they experienced as they alight from the train at Ahmedabad station (bottom, right). A truck is set on fire by way of retaliation in Godhra later in the day.

VHP calls for Maharashtra bandh on Friday

Times News Network

MUMBAI: The state unit of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has called for a Maharashtra bandh on Friday to protest the Godhra killings.

The Shiv Sena, the BJP and the RSS will participate in the bandh, state VHP secretary Vyankatesh Abdev told TNN on Wednesday evening.

Senior BJP functionary Sharad Kulkarni called on Sena chief Bal Thackeray to solicit the latter's support for the proposed 'bandh', it is learnt.

When told that the secondary school certificate (SSC) exams were scheduled to begin from Friday, Mr Abdev said, "The state government can re-schedule one paper."

Earlier, in a sharply-worded statement, Mr Thackeray lambasted the high priests of pseudo-secularism for turning a Nelson's eye to the massacre of members of the majority community in Godhra. He added sarcastically that the community may as well hereafter learn to buckle under pressure and assume that it was living in Pakistan. The Sena chief was reacting to the train incident near Godhra. He strongly opposed Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's latest call to the VHP to give up its plans to construct a Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Suspend temple campaign, PM tells VHP

Times News Network

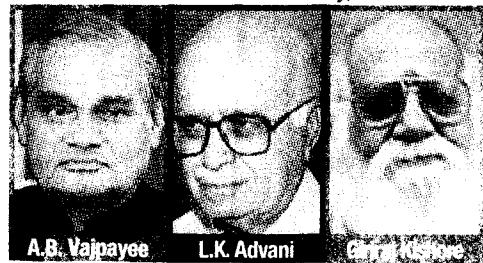
NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Wednesday asked the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) to suspend its Ayodhya campaign and said his government was committed to maintaining law and order.

This follows the violence in Godhra in Gujarat that resulted in the deaths of 55 people. Although he did not term the incident communal, Mr Vajpayee linked it to the VHP's ongoing movement for the construction of a Ram temple at the site where the Babri masjid had once stood. "An inquiry is being held... although preliminary reports indicate that the train was stopped because slogans were being shouted on the train," he said.

On the other hand, Union home minister L.K. Advani, who condemned the Godhra incident and called for the perpetrators to be punished,

warned the VHP that the government would not hesitate to take action when it came to maintaining law and order in Ayodhya.

In a statement on Wednesday, he said the



VHP had "embarked on a course of action in Ayodhya which is fraught with dangerous consequences. Thousands are sought to be assembled in Ayodhya to take part in a mass exercise

which can only lead to flagrant defiance of court orders".

Asking VHP leaders, especially Ashok Singhal, to abandon their present course of action, Mr Advani said, "If, however, they persist in their present approach, the government will not hesitate to take action against those who defy court orders or create problems for law and order."

But the VHP, virtually rejecting the Prime Minister's appeal, said it had no authority to suspend the movement and added that it was determined to go ahead with the construction plan as directed by religious leaders. "We have no authority to postpone the plans. Only the dharmacharyas (religious leaders) can take a decision. We will start moving the carved pillars to the site at 2.15 p.m. on March 15," VHP senior vice-president Acharya Giriraj Kishore said.