

# MINORITIES INDIA



## Newsletter of the 5<sup>th</sup> National Commission for Minorities

September, 2007

### 1. **Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari, former Chairperson of the National Commission for Minorities elected Vice President of India**

Consequent upon the decision of the UPA for fielding Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari as a candidate for the post of Vice President of India, Shri Ansari resigned as Chairperson of NCM on 20.7.2007. Shri Ansari was Chairperson of the NCM from 3.3.2006 to 20.7.2007.

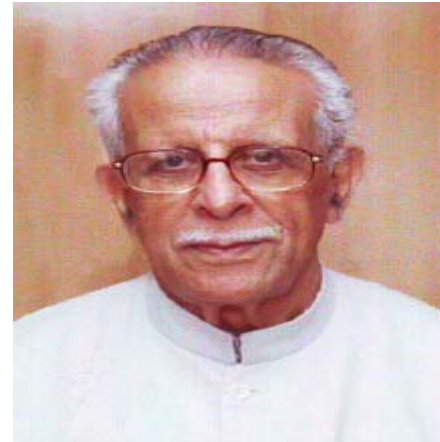
Subsequently, he was elected as Vice President of India on 10.8.2007. The Vice Chairperson and Members of the Commission felicitated Shri Ansari on his election as Vice President of India. The following Resolution was passed by the Commission in its formal meeting held on 2.8.2007:

*“At their formal meeting held in New Delhi on August 2, 2007 Members of the NCM extended to Mr. Hamid Ansari their warmest congratulations on his nomination as a candidate for the post of Vice-President of the Republic of India. They placed on record their appreciation of his leadership qualities during his tenure as the Chairperson of the NCM. In particular they lauded his vision and drive that enabled the Commission to shoulder its statutory tasks and obligations with a great measure of success”.*

A copy of the resolution was sent to Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari, Hon'ble Vice President of India.

### 2. **Shri Mohamed Shafi Qureshi nominated as Chairperson of the Commission**

The Central Government nominated **Shri Mohamed Shafi Qureshi** as Chairperson of the National Commission for Minorities vide Gazette Notification dated 31.8.2007 issued by the Union Ministry of Minority Affairs.



(Shri Mohamed Shafi Qureshi)

He assumed the charge on 3.9.2007. Born on 24.11.1929 in Srinagar (J&K), Shri Mohamed Shafi Qureshi graduated from Sri Amar Singh College, Srinagar. He obtained MA and LLB degrees from Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). He was awarded distinguished merit certificate in the college. He was Member of Students Cabinet in AMU in 1952-54 and Secretary, Law Society AMU in 1953. He was Vice President of the Geographical Society of AMU in 1954. He formed the Congress in Kashmir and became the founder President of J&K National Congress. He was elected to Lok Sabha from Anantnag Constituency in the General Elections in 1971 and 1977. He held various Ministerial positions in the Union Government during 1966-1979. He was Governor of several major States like Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh during 1991 to 1996. He has visited many foreign Countries like Japan, Australia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Libya, Bahrain, Iraq, UAE, China, Iran etc. He also visited Mauritius in December, 1991 as Leader of Indian Delegation to the World Urdu Conference.

### 3. **Smt. Deepa Jain Singh joins the Commission as Secretary**

Smt. Deepa Jain Singh, IAS '71 (HR) joined the Commission as Secretary on 18.10.2007. Before her posting in NCM she was Secretary in the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development where she handled many responsible tasks.

Shri Anil Kumar, IAS,'73(UP) who had joined the Commission as Secretary on 16.7.2007 was transferred to the Ministry of Women and Child Development on 18.10.2007.

Earlier to this, Shri Ravi Dhingra, IAS,'72(HP) who was Secretary of the National Commission for Minorities was transferred to Himachal Pradesh as Chief Secretary of the State. He demitted the office on 30.6.2007.

#### **4. Shri Harcharan Singh Josh, Member, NCM visits University of Mumbai**

Consequent upon release of Rs. 50.00 lakhs by the Government of India, on the occasion of Tercentenary of the Birth of Khalsa, the University of Mumbai created 'Guru Gobind Singh Chair' in 1999. Shri Harcharan Singh Josh, Member, NCM visited Mumbai on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2007 to review the progress of research work being done under the aegis of 'Guru Gobind Singh Chair'. Dr. Vijay Khole, Vice Chancellor of the University of Mumbai explained the progress of work of the activities of 'Guru Gobind Singh Chair'. Dr. Khole also mentioned that efforts are being made by the University to get some more experts on Sikhism for the teachings of Guru Gobind Singhji's life and Guru Granth Sahib. NCM Member was informed that the University is going to celebrate its Guru Gaddi of Guru Granth Sahib (Coronation) in October 2008 at Nanded. The meeting of Shri Josh was attended by. Dr. Vijay Khole, Vice Chancellor, Dr. A.D. Sawant, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Dr. T.R. Ghoble, Head of History Department,



(Sh. Gill, Dr. Khole, VC of University of Mumbai, Shri H. S. Josh and Prof. Ghoble)

University of Mumbai and others. In the meeting Vice Chancellor apprised Shri Josh about the progress of Research work of the Guru Gobind Singhji's Endowment Chair in the Mumbai

University. The Vice Chancellor also requested Sh. Josh to be the Member of the Advisory Committee of Guru Gobind Singh Endowment Chair as the 2008 is going to be the Celebrations of 300 years of Guru Gaddi all over the Country and abroad. Sh. Josh accepted the offer. It was proposed in the meeting that various seminars and symposia will be arranged by the University on this occasion.

#### **5. Shri Harcharan Singh Josh, Member, NCM visits Aurangabad**

On 7-8 September 2007 Sh. Harcharan Singh Josh visited Aurangabad to know about the problems being faced by Sikligar and Vanjara Sikh community. A meeting was organized at Aurangabad on 7.9.2007 in which the community leaders explained the problems of these communities relating to employment, education, issuance of BPL ration cards etc. These communities have been living in and around Aurangabad for the last 300 years and doing labour/manual work. According to them, some people of these communities accompanied Sri Guru Govind Singhji when he visited South India, especially Nanded Saheb. These people settled there and follow Sikh traditions. The Sikligar community presented a Memorandum to the NCM Member stating that some of them were putting up in Jhopar Patti near the Aurangabad Railway Station for the last 30 years. The Railway authorities have demolished their houses without giving any notice to them. About 100 families have been uprooted. The uprooted persons demanded that either compensation be paid to them or they be given alternative dwelling places.



(Visit of Sh Josh to Gurudwara Bhai Daya Singhji, Aurangabad)

The Sikh community of Aurangabad organized two meetings at Gurudwaras viz: Gurudwara Shri Guru Singh Sabha known as Bhai

Daya Singh Gurudwara and Gurudwara Guru Teg Bahadur Sabha, Aurangabad. The Sikh community demanded that they were living in the area for more than 60 years but no member from their community has been given any representation in any Government Bodies.



(Sh. H.S. Josh with Baba Sri Ramji at Manikaran Gurudwara)

Shri Josh had a separate meeting with the officers of the District Administration and the Managing Director of Maulana Azad Finance and Development Corporation and discussed the progress of distribution of loan to the minority communities. The Managing Director informed Shri Josh that approximately Rs. 2.00 Crores have been distributed to the deserving persons by the Corporation.

## 6. Visit of National Commission for Minorities to Mumbai during 5-6 September, 2007

The National Commission for Minorities held a **Public Hearing** with the members of the notified minority communities in Maharashtra on 5.9.2007 at the auditorium of Sahyadri State Guest House, Malabar Hills, Mumbai. The NCM met Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis in the morning session and Muslims in the afternoon session. NCM had made an appeal to the minority communities, NGOs and Minority Institutions by publishing in the leading newspapers and vernaculars for their participation in the hearing. The response was over whelming and the auditorium was packed to capacity. The minorities voiced their grievances freely and frankly. The Muslim community in particular expressed its pent-up anger, anguish and frustration due to non-implementation of the recommendations of Sri Krishna Commission Report on the 1992 Mumbai riots. On 6.9.2007, the Commission had a meeting

with the Chief Minister of Maharashtra which was attended by the Deputy Chief Minister, Chief Secretary, Director General of Police and other Officers of the State Government. The concerns of the minorities were brought to the notice of the Chief Minister and the recommendations of Sri Krishna Commission Report were also discussed in the meeting. Shri Mohamed Shafi Qureshi, Chairperson, Shri M.P. Pinto, Vice Chairperson, Prof. Zoya Hasan, Dr. Dileep Padagaonkar and Sh. H.S. Josh, Dr. Mehroo Dhunjisha Bengalee and Lama Ven. Chosphe Zotpa, Members of the NCM presented their view points of NCM in the meeting.

### A. Main problems and grievances emerged during the morning session of the hearing with the Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis.

The educational problems of minorities were brought before the Commission during the hearing. There was a demand that adequate financial allocations for all minority educational institutions as well as loans for business projects should be provided. Some members of the Christian community demanded that the Scheduled Castes status may be extended to the Dalit Christians also. It was further demanded that there should be adequate representation of Christians in educational institutions and in Government employment especially in the police force and the bureaucracy. Some members of the Christian community demanded protection of burial grounds of Christians and removal of encroachment on Church property. The instances of brutal attacks on Pastors and Christian institutions were also highlighted with the request to provide adequate protection in order to preclude such occurrences in the future. Members of the community urged that criminal cases should be filed against the miscreants and they should be given punishment commensurate with the enormity of the offence. The indifference and laxity shown by the police during the onslaught of the anti-social elements on the members of the Christian community, as well as the Christian institutions and refusal to register FIRs was also brought forth before the Commission. There was a unanimous demand to protect the life, property and dignity of the Christian community.

A member of the Sikh community demanded that there should be adequate representation of minorities in the Commissions and Boards established by the State Government. The members of the Buddhist community demanded that all privileges should be provided to the Neo-Buddhists who are by and large a deprived segment

of society. Some of the participants from the Buddhist community demanded protection of their distinctive culture.

The Parsi community demanded the protection of Fire Temples of Parsis and removal of encroachments on their religious places. There was a further demand for earmarking of some seats for Parsi students in educational institutions, especially those established by the Parsi community. Some of the participants from Parsi community expressed concern over the dwindling number of vultures in the city causing problems in disposal of dead bodies.

There was a common demand from the minority communities for opening up Anganwadis and Balwadis in minority dominated areas. The participants also demanded that the State Government should highlight Prime Minister's 15 Point Programme for the welfare of minorities and implement it in letter and spirit so that minorities could be benefited. There was a demand for grants-in-aid to minorities schools and that the State should uphold the rights available to minorities under the Constitution. There was a strong demand that the State Minority Commission must hold similar meetings at District level so as to cover minorities living in the rural Maharashtra.

#### B. Main problems and grievances emerged during the afternoon session of the hearing with the Muslims.

The auditorium was packed to capacity as members of the Muslim community narrated the heart rending atrocities inflicted on them and the organized mass killings during the communal riots in 1992-93 in Mumbai. They highlighted their woes and miseries, their plight and frustrations in the aftermath of the communal riots. Some of the women who were the direct victims of the brutal attacks during communal riots and who had lost their kith and kin narrated their harrowing accounts. One of the women whose husband was mercilessly butchered during the riots had shown a photograph of her husband with the blood oozing out of his wounds. The picture itself spoke volumes about the brutality, insanity and barbarism perpetrated during the riots. It shows that human sensibilities were blunted under the influence of the communal frenzy during the riots.

There was a strong demand for the implementation of the recommendations of the Sri Krishna Commission Report. Sri Krishna

Commission was set up by the State Government to inquire into the communal riots which occurred in Mumbai in 1992-93 after the demolition of Babri Masjid. The Sri Krishna Commission had prepared a comprehensive report and submitted the same to the State Government on 18<sup>th</sup> February, 1998. A total of 900 persons were killed, 2036 persons injured and properties worth crores looted and destroyed. The Commission had indicted 31 police personnel, some politicians and journalists. However, the State Government showed reluctance to implement the recommendations contained in the report. A total of 1371 cases were closed for want of witnesses.

There was a demand from the Muslim community for adequate representation in educational institutions and Government employment specially police and bureaucracy. Also, Muslims demanded protection of their burial grounds and removal of the encroachment on the Wakf properties as well as on Qabristan. There was also a demand that adequate financial allocation may be provided for minority educational institutions and loans for business projects. There should be special consideration for Urdu medium institutions. Some of the participants spoke about lack of Urdu medium schools in their areas and shortage of funds and teachers in such schools. Muslims also demanded the removal of the stringent conditions stipulated for the grant of loans and enhancement of the loan limit. There was a further demand that some special schemes should be launched for rehabilitation and socio-economic and educational progress of those who suffered heavily due to the '*after effects*' of communal riots. Muslims unanimously demanded the prevention of harassment to Muslim youths by implicating them in false cases on the pretext of their involvement in terrorist activities. There was a strong demand for the abolition of MCOCA (Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act) which was termed as a draconian law under which confessions are extracted from Muslim youths by the police through intimidation and physical torture. Some Muslims demanded that the State should look into the religious signs, symbols and images in Government offices as the same dilute the secular nature of the State. Lack of civic amenities in Muslim dominated areas was highlighted by some of the participants. The Muslims demanded that rule of equality should prevail in the State and that the constitutional rights guaranteed to them must be enforced in letter and spirit.

C. Meeting with the Chief Minister, Maharashtra and other State authorities.

On 6<sup>th</sup> September 2007, the Commission had a meeting with the Chief Minister of Maharashtra which was attended by the Deputy Chief Minister, Chief Secretary, Director General of Police and other Senior officers of the State Government. The concerns of minorities as emerged during the two sessions of Public Hearing were brought to the notice of the Chief Minister, Maharashtra. He assured the Commission that the recommendations of Sri Krishna Commission Report will certainly be implemented in the letter and spirit. Chief Minister also informed the Commission that a proposal for enhanced compensation to the 1992-93 Bombay riot victims on the pattern of the relief package given to 1984 anti-Sikh riot victims and Godhara victims of Gujarat would be sent to Government of India for their consideration. The State Government has decided to set up two Fast Track Courts for speedy disposal of pending cases.

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