

MINORITIES INDIA



Second Newsletter of the 5th National Commission for Minorities

November, 2006

Vice Chairman and three Members of the Commission nominated to NCM – Commission gets a new Secretary.

Sh. M. P. Pinto joined the Commission as a Member on 4.7.2006. On 17.7.2006, the Government nominated him as Vice Chairman of the Commission. Dr. Dileep Padgaonkar, Prof. Zoya Hasan and Lt. Gen (Retd.) A. M. Sethna were nominated as Members on 26.6.2006. Smt. Deepa Jain Singh, IAS (Haryana : 71) was transferred from the post of Secretary, NCM to Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development on 31.7.2006. On 4.8.2006, Shri Ravi Dhingra, IAS (HP : 72) joined the Commission as Secretary.

2. Sad demise of Lt. Gen. (Retd.) A. M. Sethna

Lt. Gen. (Retd.) A. M. Sethna, PVSM, AVSM was the Vice Chief of Army Staff and Member, NCM left for his heavenly abode



on Tuesday, the 17th October 2006 leaving everybody in the Commission sad and deeply grieved. He was also Member of the 3rd and 4th

Statutory Commission. His invaluable contribution to the Commission, particularly for the Parsi community will always be remembered.

3. Meetings organized by NCM with leaders of minority communities during March, 2006 – September, 2006.

Shortly after the Fifth Statutory Commission assumed charge on 6th March, 2006, it had held a series of meetings with leaders of the minority communities and other eminent persons regarding the action plan of NCM. A list of such meetings held by the Commission is given below :-

- (i) 1st Brainstorming Session on 24.3.2006



(1st Brainstorming Session on 24.3.2006)

- (ii) 2nd Brainstorming Session on 4.4.2006

- (iii) Meeting with Christian leaders on 4.8.2006

- (iv) Meeting with MPs on 5.8.2006



(Meeting with non-Muslim MPs on 5.8.06)

- (v) Meeting with Buddhist leaders on 18.8.2006



(Meeting with Buddhist leaders on 18.8.06)

- (vi) Meeting with MPs on 23.8.2006



(Meeting with Muslim MPs on 23.8.06)

- (vii) Meeting with Muslim leaders on 21.9.2006

The very purpose of holding these meetings is to frame out an action plan for the Commission. The major issues emerging from discussions in these meetings are being prioritized by Members of the Commission.

4. Meeting held on 24.8.2006 with the officers of Government of NCT of Delhi, MCD and NDMC to discuss the shortage of Urdu and Punjabi textbooks and Urdu and Punjabi teachers in Delhi Schools.

A meeting was held on 24.8.2006 with officers of Government of NCT of Delhi, MCD and NDMC to discuss the shortage of Urdu and Punjabi textbooks and Urdu and Punjabi teachers in Delhi Schools.

Smt. Reena Ray, Education Secretary, Government of NCT of Delhi stated that she had a meeting with the Principals of the Urdu medium schools of Delhi Government. The NCERT publishes Urdu textbooks for Classes IX to XII. All the NCERT textbooks are available except 7 textbooks for Class IX which are still awaited from Jamia Millia University. Smt. Ray mentioned that Delhi Government earlier gave financial assistance to the girl students to purchase Urdu textbooks. Unfortunately, since the textbooks were not available when money was sanctioned, the amount could not be utilised for the purpose it was sanctioned. The School Principals have been advised to purchase Urdu textbooks of NCERT in adequate numbers for the School Library.

Smt. Ray mentioned that Urdu textbooks published by SCERT, Delhi are used for Classes I to VIII. All the SCERT textbooks are available except 2 textbooks for standard VII. She also stated that one of the major problems being faced by students of Urdu medium schools is the absence of supportive material / help books with the result that the students are forced to purchase help books published by private parties which are mostly substandard. She suggested that NCM may take up this issue with the Jamia Millia University and the AMU to produce

good quality supportive material for the Urdu medium students.

As regards Urdu teachers, she mentioned that when the last meeting was held on 24.7.2006, the vacancy of TGT teachers was 42 and the vacancy of PGT teachers was 4. Earlier there used to be 18 Urdu medium schools, two of which were functioning in afternoon shift. On account of the severe winter in Delhi, Delhi Government has taken a policy decision to abolish all afternoon shifts with the result that two afternoon shifts of Urdu medium schools are now merged with the 16 day shifts in the 16 Urdu medium schools. The new arrangement has reduced the TGT vacancies to 12 and TGT teachers are now becoming surplus. The Delhi Government has taken decision to keep the posts of Urdu teachers within the 16 Urdu medium schools only. Earlier they used to be posted in other schools.

It was decided to have another meeting on the subject with the Chief Secretary, Delhi and Chairperson, NDMC.

5. Hearings held in the Commission.

5.1 Hearing held on 28.7.2006 with the officers of Government of Uttar Pradesh.

A news item was published in Qaumi Awaz, a Urdu daily on 16.3.2005 reporting that in the night of 26.9.2004, three Muslim youths, namely (i) Sh. Arshad, (age 16 years) (ii) Sh. Meherban (age 16 years) and (iii) Sh. Asif (age 18 years) were murdered by police at Dadri, Ghaziabad. The news report indicated that Muslim youths were brought to Kasna Police Station for interrogation. The family members of the victims of police atrocity were informed that the youths were released by the police after interrogation.

However, during the 3 days from 11.3.2005 and 13.3.2005, it was revealed that the youths were murdered by the police and their dead bodies dumped somewhere.

The news report indicated that the whereabouts of Sh. Alok Sharma, the SHO and some other persons, S/Sh. Ram Snehi, Kunwar Pal Singh, Ravi Dutta Tyagi, Safdar Khan, Harminder Singh, Karamvir Singh, Sanjay Singh, Satprakash Singh and Netrapal Singh who are alleged to be involved in the incident are not known. It was also seen from the news report that the three youths were taken to the Kasna Police Station on a charge of selling waste material (*kabari*) without license.

This case was being pursued by NCM since March, 2005. As a result of close follow up by the Commission, the case was investigated and the guilty police officials were removed from service. The families of the three Muslim youths who were killed, were given compensation of Rs.5 lakh each. However, prosecution and property attachment proceedings against the guilty police officials could not be initiated on account of a stay order given by the Allahabad High Court. On 28.7.2006, the Commission summoned the Law Secretary and Home Secretary of Uttar Pradesh to discuss the feasibility of vacation of the stay order. During the hearing held on 28.7.2006, the Commission was informed that the Advocate General of U.P had advised filing of an expeditious application before the Allahabad High Court for vacation of stay order. As per the latest information available with the Commission, the State Government's application for vacation of the stay order is yet to be heard by the Allahabad High Court.

5.2 Hearing held on 22.8.2006 regarding demolition of boundary wall of St. Xavier's

school at Pathalgaon, District Jashpur (Chattisgarh).

Ms. Mabel Rebello, MP had complained to the Commission about the demolition of boundary wall and the monument of St. Francis Xavier at St. Xavier's school, Pathalgaon, District Jashpur, Chattisgarh on 2.2.2006. This demolition took place by the order of SDM, in connection with a land-revenue case, u/s 170-B of Chattisgarh Land Revenue Code. The representation indicated that a case under Section 170-B could only be initiated if provisions of Section 165 (6) of the Code are violated which prohibits transfer of land from a tribal to non-tribal. In this case, a tribal had sold the land to another tribal and therefore no violation of section 165(6) of the Code had taken place.

A hearing was held in the Commission on 22.8.2006 when Sh. R.P.Jain, Home Secretary (Chattisgarh), Sh. S.K. Sharma, Joint Collector (Jashpur) and Sh. H.K.Rathore, SP (Jashpur) appeared. It was brought out during the hearing that the disputed land was sold by a tribal to another tribal in the year 1968. Sh. Anuranjan and Rupal, the heirs of the original owner of the land lodged a complaint in 2005 with the SDM, Pathalgaon that the 1968 sale was fraudulent. On receipt of this complaint, the SDM passed an order dated 31.1.2006 concluding that the 1968 sale was fraudulent because the disputed land was presently being used by the local Catholic Society.

The Commission noted with surprise that the present usage of land could be a ground for holding the sale of the land 37 years ago as fraudulent. The State Govt. Officers could not provide any satisfactory answer as to why SDM acted in undue haste to implement his order dated 31.1.06 and resorted to demolition on 2.2.2006 i.e. barely

after one day. The NCM also concluded that the entire incident took place with the knowledge of the Collector, Jashpur. The Commission was also informed that an appeal against the demolition order of SDM was pending with the Collector. The NCM vide letter dated 24.8.2006 made the following 2 recommendations to the Chief Secretary, Chattisgarh-

- (i) The SDM should immediately be transferred from his post and departmental enquiry should be completed as early as possible and in any case within the next six months.
- (ii) The Collector should be immediately transferred and strict disciplinary action should be taken against him. This too should be completed within six months. The appeal against the SDM's order must not be heard by the present Collector. It should be transferred to some other suitable Appellate Authority. If the Collector has already heard the appeal, he should be directed not to pass any orders on it and the matter be heard by his successor.

However, Ms. Rebello on 6.9.2006 informed the Commission that the Collector had heard the appeal and had rejected it. Since the recommendations of the Commission conveyed to the Chattisgarh Government vide letter dt. 24.8.2006 were ignored and the Collector was allowed to hear the appeal and pass the order in defiance of the Commission's recommendations in para 3 (i) and (ii) above, the Commission has issued summons to Sh. R.P.Bagai, Chief Secretary and Sh. B.K.S. Ray, Addl. Chief Secretary of Chattisgarh to appear before the Commission on 22.11.2006.

5.3 Hearing held with Joint Secretary, Department of Culture and officers of National Gallery of Modern Art on 5.9.2006.

Ms. Mehjabeen Akhtar, Asstt. Library and Information Officer, NGMA has been representing to NCM with the following grievances:-

- (i) She was denied of gazetted status by NGMA;
- (ii) Her service book was tampered with by NGMA unauthorizedly; and
- (iii) She was denied of the benefit of upgradation of her pay scale under ACP scheme.

During the hearing on 5.9.2006 in the Commission, the entire case of the officer was discussed at length and it was decided that Department of Culture would be submitting its report within one month. Sh. R.C. Mishra, Joint Secretary, Department of Culture who attended the hearing on 5.9.2006 subsequently, informed the Commission on 5.10.2006 as under:-

‘a proposal has been received from NGMA for holding a DPC as per the draft Recruitment Rules for regularization of Ms. Akhtar as ALIO. Keeping in view the fact that appointment order of Ms. Akhtar as ALIO was issued by NGMA on 17.11.1999 when there was no Recruitment Rule for the post, the proposal of holding a DPC for regularization at this stage, as proposed by the NGMA, has been referred to DOP&T for their advice etc. Meanwhile NGMA has been requested that pending clarification from the DOP&T, they should continue to extend all benefits and privileges attached to the post of

ALIO including the gazetted status in terms of their own order dated 17.10.1999 till the same is modified or amended, if so required, after receiving the advice from the DOP&T.’

Director, NGMA was requested to confirm whether the advice of Department of Culture has been implemented by his organization. Response from NGMA is awaited.

6. Visits of Commission.

6.1 Visit to Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh in June, 2006.

Sh. Harcharan Singh Josh and Ven. Lama Chospel Zotpa, Members of the Commission visited Bhopal, Jabalpur and Raipur during 13-18 June, 2006 to enquire into a large number of incidents adversely affecting the Christian community in Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh. Commission received complaints that Christian community was being subjected to terrible harassment and violence in the districts of Bhopal, Jhabua, Jabalpur, Betul, Hoshangabad, Seoni, Dhar and Khargone. Similar complaints were received from Jashpur, Raipur and Bilaspur districts of Chattisgarh. The Members of the Commission held several meetings with the Collectors of the affected districts as well as with the police officers. The NCM team observed that most of the District Collectors and the SSPs were not serious about the complaints submitted to them repeatedly by the Christian community with the result that the miscreants continued to persecute and terrorize the Christian community on the plea of conversion of Hindus to Christianity. It was found that the police officials were mere spectators in all the incidents and did nothing to protect the Christian community. In almost all the cases, the FIRs were not allowed to be

lodged and therefore, there was a strong ground to believe that the local police was in connivance with the miscreants. It appeared that the whole exercise was being done to create systematic terror among the Christian community on allegations of conversion, despite the fact that not a single case of conversion on allurement or coercion was established. The NCM delegation met Sh. Balram Jakahr, Hon'ble Governor of Madhya Pradesh on 15.6.06. The Governor also expressed his concern about the repeated incidents of atrocities against the Christian community. The NCM team also met the Chief Secretary of Madhya Pradesh. The NCM team in its report made following recommendations:-

- (i) There should be a thorough inquiry into the incidents of atrocities against the Christian community. The demand of the Christian organizations that the inquiry may be conducted by CBI or a judge of the Supreme Court or High Court should be considered in order that adequate security is provided to the minority community of these States. Any one found guilty or indulging in creating unrest should be dealt with according to law.
- (ii) Directions may be given by Ministry of Home Affairs to the State Government to ensure that there is no persecution of any person on baseless allegations.
- (iii) The police department and the District administration should remain vigilant to deal with similar complaints in future.

A copy of the report of the NCM team was sent to Ministry of Minority Affairs on 27.6.06.

6.2 Visit to Hyderabad.

On 12.8.2006, Sh. M. P. Pinto Vice Chairman of the Commission visited Hyderabad and interacted with the newly-appointed Members of Andhra Pradesh Minority Commission as well as with the local leaders of the Christian community. He also called on Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and the Home Secretary of the State Government. During his interaction with the State Minorities Commission, some infrastructural problems came up for discussion. Apart from lack of a proper building, the staff of the State Commission does not appear to be in position for very long and therefore, institutional memory seemed to be lacking. Lack of familiarity with the governmental ways of functioning has made it difficult for them to articulate their concerns and even more difficult to find solutions for them. The State Commission was advised by Vice Chairman, NCM to draw a plan of action listing out the areas that would need intervention and sorting out how they propose to go about it. Sh. Pinto's meeting with the Christian leaders provided the usual mix of complaints and suggestions. The difference here was that most of the complaints pertained to the field of education. The incident of wrongful arrest and harassment of nuns in Tirupati was mentioned but timely intervention at all levels has considerably lessened tension. The main grievance of the Christian community is that the grant in aid being given to their schools was slowly being phased out. Each time a teacher or instructor retired or moved out of a post the grant in aid for that post was stopped and the institution could fill the post only if they were prepared to pay for it themselves. The community saw this as an attempt to squeeze out schools that need the grant in aid to stay afloat. These schools are typically located in rural areas and cater to needs of the poor and marginalized. Sh. Pinto invited attention of Chief Minister, Andhra Pradesh to this problem.

6.3 Visit to Malegaon.

Mohammad Hamid Ansari, Chairman and Sh. Michael P. Pinto, Vice Chairman, NCM visited Malegaon on 26.9.2006. The city had witnessed bomb blasts on 8.9.2006 as a result of which several Muslims had died.

The NCM team was met by a group led by the Congress MLA Sh. Sheikh Rashid, the Jamiat Ulema and the Ahle-Hadith group. These groups submitted to the NCM delegation the following:-

(i) Highest priority should be given to a thorough investigation to identify and punish the culprits. A cautionary warning about possible trouble at the time of Shab-e-Barat was given to senior police officials by the former MLA Shri Nehal Ahmad. Despite it, adequate precautions were not taken. No confidence is reposed in the Senior Superintendent of Police Shri Rajvardhan. The work of the ATS appears satisfactory. It would nevertheless be preferable to have an inquiry conducted by the CBI. Given the lack of any developmental activity in Malegaon and its impact on public perceptions, the need of the hour is to have a special development package from the Central Government. This could take the shape of fifty thousand dwelling units to be constructed for power-loom workers.

(ii) The administration failed to provide security on September 8 and is now tilting the investigation. The public has no trust in the SSP and wants a CBI inquiry. Facts about the police firing on September 8 are being concealed and twisted. The same holds for the investigation in the purchase of the two bicycles that were used in the bomb blasts. The sale register of the shop is in the possession of the police and on the basis of details obtained from it sketches of possible culprits were circulated. Muslims constitute 70-73 percent of Malegaon's population;

because of it the city has been for decades neglected by the State Administration. The Patil Commission Report into the 2001 riots has not yet been made public and a similar fate awaits the inquiry into the September 8 incident unless the Central Government took greater interest in the matter and entrusts it to the CBI.

(iii) A conscious attempt is being made to malign the Malegaon Muslims (who played a prominent role in the Freedom Movement). There is criminal neglect in the investigation process; for this reason, it should be handed over to the CBI. The police firing on the afternoon of September 8 near Azad Nagar Police Station was unwarranted since the preliminary steps of warning the public, and a lathi charge, had not been taken and no senior police officer was present at the scene. Although the Muslims were the victims of the bomb blast, the police inquiry is focused on them and over 4000 persons have been investigated. A local youngster, Irfan Ahmad Akeel Ahmad, was beaten and repeatedly interrogated by the police and offered Rupees 5 lakhs to disclose the names of persons involved. The compensation of Rupees one lakh offered to the families of the victims is inadequate and should be on the same level as that given to the victims of the Mumbai train blasts.

The Malegaon Peace Committee met the NCM delegation and mentioned that inter-community relations in the city have always been good and after the bomb blasts, many Hindus had donated blood for the victims. The two communities are interlinked in their commercial activities. The role of the police, and particularly of the S.S.P. was positive and praiseworthy. He should continue to investigate the incidents. The ulema in the city are indulging in political manoeuvring. Special attention does need to be paid to the

city's requirements. It is surprising that at a time of stress, some people had found it fit to demonstrate and divert attention from more pressing tasks. Malegaon should be (a) made into a district to ensure posting of senior level officials (b) given a civil hospital (c) should have a development plan so that the educational requirements of the youth are catered for.

A lawyer's group also met the NCM team and stated that Muslims are discontented with the police and do not trust it. Investigation into the blasts of September 8 is slow and is being manipulated. Hence the need for a CBI inquiry. Media reporting from and on Malegaon shows a clear bias. One member of the group, a Notary Public, handed over photocopy of the affidavit sworn before him by Arfan Ahmad Akeel Ahmad stating that he was offered Rupees Five Lakhs 'to falsely disclose names of persons involved' in the blasts.

The District Administration submitted before the NCM team the following:-

- (i) No trouble was anticipated during the Friday prayers and, after the strenuous policing arrangements for the Ganapati festival, the force was given some time off during the day on Friday September 8 so that it could be redeployed in the evening when Shab-e-Barat would get underway;
- (ii) The junior police officials present at the Azad Nagar police station (housed in a dilapidated structure) may have panicked and fired 16 rounds when they saw an angry crowd collect in the vicinity; and
- (iii) Diligent work on building community relations prevented a communal outburst after the incident.

Observations and Recommendations

It was evident to the NCM team that there is palpable anger amongst the Muslim residents of Malegaon over the following:

- (a) The failure of the district administration to pay heed to the advice given by the former MLA of possible trouble on Shab-e-Barat;
- (b) The hasty decision at Azad Nagar Police Station to fire 25 rounds at a crowd that was evidently distressed and emotional over what had happened;
- (c) The 'one-sided' investigation process underway, the 'harassment' of Muslims who have been the victims of the bomb blasts, and the failure to come forth with satisfactory explanations about the alleged involvement of certain Hindu groups in recent incidents elsewhere in the State. As a result, their lack of confidence in the local police officials appears total; they are also sceptical over the possibility, on the basis of past experience, of the State Government redressing their grievances.

The Muslim groups who met the NCM team at Malegaon look to the Central Government for reassurance on three counts: (i) a fair and speedy inquiry, and identification of the culprits, (ii) a compensation package in line with that offered to the victims of similar incidents in the recent past, and (iii) a meaningful gesture to the public aimed at reviving a dying city and giving it the assurance of equal treatment in developmental matters.

The Malegaon Peace Committee's suggestions about upgrading the administrative structure of the city are a reiteration of the recommendation of the Raghubar Dayal Enquiry Committee appointed by the Government of India after the Malegaon riots of August-October 1967.

The allegations of neglect are thus not unfounded.

The unease in Malegaon, coming in the wake of the aggressive police investigations after the Mumbai train blasts, is being shared by a wide cross section of Muslims in different parts of the country.

6.4 Visit to Gujarat.

On 29.8.2006, the Managing Trustee, Centre for Social Justice and a social activist made a complaint to the Chairman, NCM on the plight of persons displaced as a result of the communal violence in 2002. They pointed out that more than 5000 Muslim families in Gujarat are staying in make shift colonies in four districts of Gujarat. In view of the tense situation in their original place of residence, these people are unable to return. In the absence of basic amenities like safe drinking water, drainage, health, education etc. the condition of those living in these colonies is pitiable. They, therefore, requested the NCM to make a first hand assessment of the entire issue by visiting the camps.

The matter was discussed in the Formal Meeting of the Commission held on 7.9.2006 and in pursuance of the decision, a team of NCM comprising Sh. M. P. Pinto, Vice Chairman, Dr. Dileep Padagaonkar and Prof. Zoya Hasan, Members and Sh. A. Banerji, Joint Secretary, NCM visited 17 camps in the Dahod, Panchmahal, Ahmedabad and Sabarkantha districts from 13.10.2006 to 17.10.2006.

During their tour of the camps, members observed that the inmates were denied the most rudimentary civic amenities. The camps do not have potable water, sanitary facilities, streetlights, schools, primary health centres and approach roads.

It was noted that an overwhelming number of families in these camps do not have ration cards. The few who do have them are in the above-poverty-line (APL) category and their request for below-poverty-line (BPL) ration cards has been repeatedly turned down. As a result, they are unable to obtain food grains, cereals, and kerosene at subsidized rates. This has accentuated their hardship because as a result of their displacement, most of the residents lost their means of livelihood and now subsist on daily wages.

The NCM team noted that the State Government has provided no amenities or facilities in the camps nor has it made any attempt to facilitate the return of these families, in a safe environment, to their original homes.

In their discussions with State government officials, and in their meeting with the Chief Minister of Gujarat, the team was informed of the State government's view that the inmates were living in the camps voluntarily. In view of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the Commission finds this viewpoint untenable and evasive of a government's basic responsibility. The Commission cannot avoid the feeling that the State government is not fulfilling its constitutional responsibility and that even four and a half years after the riots, it has not been able to create an atmosphere in which those displaced by the riots can return to their homes.

The NCM team in its report recommended that basic amenities must be provided in the camps. It was also observed in the report that there is an urgent need for the Central government to design and implement an immediate special economic package for rehabilitation of internally displaced Muslim families in Gujarat. The NCM report was forwarded to the Prime Minister and the Union

Minister for Minority Affairs on 26.10.2006. The Commission also issued a Press Note on the Gujarat visit on 23.10.2006.

7. New 15 Point Programme for welfare of minorities announced by the Prime Minister.

On 22.8.2006, the 15 Point Programme for the welfare of minorities was revised and the revised programme was sent to the States by the Prime Minister's Office. At the Union level, the implementation of the new programme will be monitored by a Committee of Secretaries. The Hon'ble Prime Minister has written to the Chief Ministers urging them to implement the new programme and to set up a monitoring mechanism in his State. The Prime Minister's Office while forwarding the new programme to NCM has informed that wherever possible, 15% of targets and funds will be earmarked for minorities in the schemes included in the Programme.

8. Hon'ble Prime Minister inaugurates the 5th Annual Conference of State Minorities Commissions held on 2.11.2006.

NCM organized the 5th Annual Conference of State Minorities Commissions on 2.11.2006 at Main Committee Room of Parliament House Annexe. The Conference was inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister.



Delivering the inaugural address at the 5th Annual Conference of State Minorities Commissions, the Prime Minister stated that cent per cent homogeneity in the country has never existed nor will exist in future. He also

emphasized the need for educational upliftment of the minorities, particularly of the Muslim community. For this purpose, he felt there should be schemes for setting up of new higher secondary schools for girls in Muslim Concentration Districts. Referring to the Bill introduced in the Lok Sabha for upgrading the status of NCM to a Constitutional Body, Prime Minister stated that the Commission has to given adequate powers to investigate into the complaints and that its finances and manpower base will also be expanded in order that it can play a more proactive role for the benefit of minority communities.

Sh. A.R. Antulay, Minister for Minority Affairs, Sh. Shivraj V. Patil, Home Minister and Sh. Arjun Singh, the HRD Minister also addressed the Conference.

Sh. M. H. Ansari, Chairman, NCM in his welcome speech said the minorities are assets not liabilities and they constitute 18.4 per cent of the population. He said the pace of progress of the minorities thus inevitably impacts on the all-round progress of the country. The minorities need assurance of physical security, of life with dignity, and of equality of treatment at the hands of the agents of the State. They stand in need of accelerated development, and of carefully calibrated affirmative action direction at achieving it so that they can attain substantive equality and contribute in full measure to the national effort. With regard to the implementation of the new 15 Point Programme of the Prime Minister, Shri Ansari said that given past experience, the need of the hours is to supplement the official monitoring machinery with a civil society mechanism at Central and State levels. Such a step would also help generate public awareness of minority questions, an awareness that is sadly lacking as is evident from the absence of debate within the Parliament and in the Media.

Justice A.M. Ahmadi was the lead speaker in the first working session on 'Constitutional Safeguards for the Minorities'. Justice Ahmadi referred to the liberal provisions regarding the minority rights in Articles 25,26, 29 and 30 of the Constitution of India. He stated that the Constitution guarantees protection and respect of minority rights. However, it is essential that such rights should be translated into reality. He stressed on the need for education of Muslim girls in particular. Sufficient schools should be created in and around the Muslim clusters, he said.



Dr. Bhalchandra Mungekar, Member, Planning Commission was the lead speaker in the second working session on 'Welfare & Development of Minorities'. He stated that the uneven development in the country has been due to several factors such as unequal access to income producing assets, lack of self-employment, educational opportunities and training and lack of meaningful share in power.

On 2nd November, NCM issued a Press Note on the deliberations of the Conference.