

Quarterly MINO-VIEW

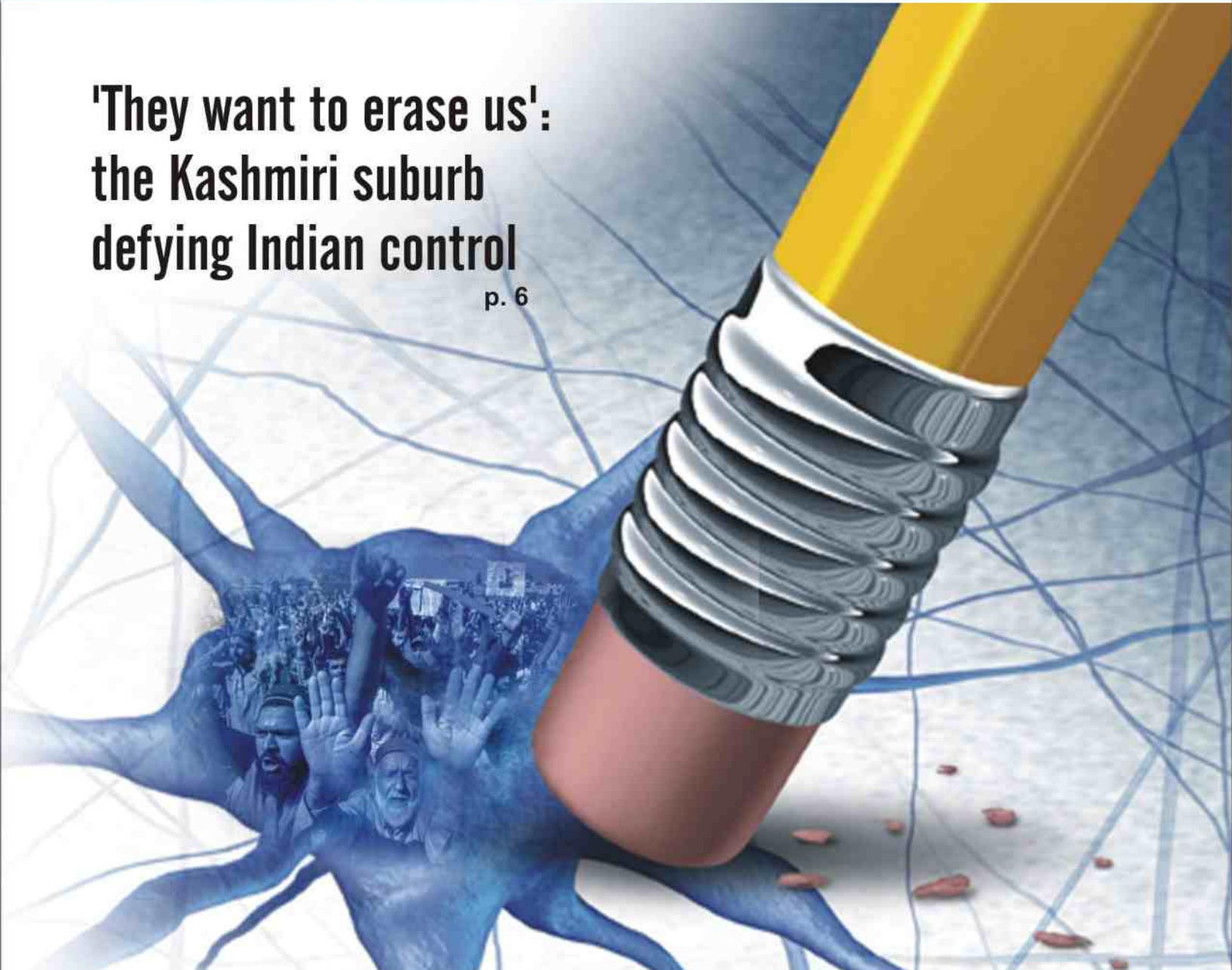
Vol: 07 Issue: 03
July - Sep. 2019



Voice of Minorities & Oppressed People in South Asian Societies

'They want to erase us': the Kashmiri suburb defying Indian control

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Civilians in the Srinagar suburb of Anchar
say they are engaged in a fight for existence



Sir Ganga Ram Heritage Foundation www.sgrhf.org.pk

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Editorial

We welcome you to our fresh issue of Mino-View. Response and feedback that we get from our respected reader really make us energetic to work hard even in the seventh year of this publication. Some issues that get placed in this outing are: Despite the constitutional abolition of untouchability in India caste discrimination may have changed form but it has not disappeared at all, the substance is there. Caste follows you wherever you go. Uprooting the place of birth and migrating to a distant land may not be enough to save you from caste discrimination and atrocities. The STs, SCs and OBC are aggregated as lower castes. They are not represented proportionally in social, economic and political sphere. The Supreme Court of India expressed serious concern over deaths during manual scavenging and manhole cleaning across the country and stated, nowhere in the world people are sent to "gas chambers" to die. It is most inhuman to treat a human being. On the other side on the European Development Days 2019, eight thousand participants were brought together from all over the world to discuss the theme Addressing inequalities: Building a world which leaves no one behind. There the participants engaged in dialogue with the Dalit human right defenders from Nepal, India and Bangladesh to learn more about how to take action to fight caste discrimination. One positive development is that, Overall, Nepal has recognized the existence of Caste-based discrimination and has adopted legislation to deal with such issue, in a structural manner. At the same time, implementation challenges remain. In the Caste-based society, the destiny is impossible to achieve and in reality, it is an antithesis of founding principles of People's Republic that is Bharat. According to Indian rights activist, Nepal can lead Dalit empowerment movement as it has acknowledged at the United Nations that discrimination against Dalits is a problem. Acknowledgement of problem is the key to resolving it. Unlike the government of India, Nepal government has internationally acknowledged discrimination against Dalits and can lead international efforts to bring Dalit at par with other communities. Nepal government has adopted a number of policies to end caste-based discrimination. But the policies have not succeeded is due to Hinduism which does not denounce discrimination against Dalits. These issues and other happening and developments regarding caste and marginalized community of South Asian Region presented in this Mino-View. We will welcome feedback from our respected readers and concerned quarter. We invite social forces from all over the region to join hands for adopting a way towards egalitarianism.

Editor



Nepal encouraged to implement UN experts recommendations



Renu Sijapati, from the Feminist Dalit Organisation - FEDO Nepal, delivered an oral statement at the 41st session of the UN Human Rights Council in June 2019, encouraging Nepal to implement the recommendations in the UN Nepal visit report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. The visit took place in October 2018.

Overall, Nepal has recognized the existence of caste-based discrimination and has adopted legislation to deal with such issue, in a structural manner. At the same time, implementation challenges remain.

Ms. Sijapati mentioned in her statement, “out of the total incidents of rape in Nepal, 21% come from the Dalit community” - a high demographic concentration of this group. Moreover, Ms. Sijapati added, “in 80% of such cases involving Dalit women, the victim has been killed”, pointing to a very low social cost for perpetrating sexual violence against women from this community. The statement also underlines that social stigma, the normalization of violence, casteist attitudes combined with patriarchal social norms leading to lower education levels and a high percentage of poverty among Dalit women.

Ms. Sijapati closed her statement by declaring her engagement in a forward-looking dialogue, encouraging Nepal to implement the recommendations contained in the report in good faith and in close consultation with Dalit women organizations.



Source: IDSN

Nowhere in the world people sent to gas chambers to die, says SC on manual scavenging

Nowhere in the world people are sent to "gas chambers to die", fumed the Supreme Court, while expressing serious concern over deaths during manual scavenging and manhole cleaning across the country.

Slamming the government authorities for not providing protective gear like masks and oxygen cylinders to people engaged in manual scavenging and manhole cleaning, the apex court said this is the "most inhuman" way to treat a human being.

The top court also said that although over 70 years have passed since India got Independence, caste discrimination still persists in the country and the society is not treating all human beings equally despite the Constitutional mandate.

"Why are you not providing them masks and oxygen cylinders? In no country in the world, people are sent to gas chambers to die. Four to five people are dying due to this every month," a bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra asked Attorney General KK Venugopal.

while conceding that people involved in such works are dying in the country day-after-day, said deaths have also happened due to potholes on the roads but no action has been taken against the authorities concerned.

He told the bench, also comprising justices M R Shah and B R Gavai, that law of tort, which deals with civil wrong and its liabilities thereof, is not developed and practiced in the country and though the magistrates have jurisdiction, not a single case has been registered suo motu (on its own) on such incidents.

"A case cannot be filed against people who are sweeping the streets or cleaning sewers. Cases should be filed against the supervisory officers and authorities who are responsible for such works as they have collected taxes from the citizens for this," the Attorney General said.

The bench remarked, "This is the most inhuman way to treat a human being".

"It is the most uncivilized and inhuman situation where the people are losing their lives in gas chambers without any masks or oxygen cylinders," the bench said, adding, "You have to take care of people. People



are dying everyday due to this".

"All the human beings are equal and when they are equal you should provide them equal opportunities as mandated under the Constitution. You are not even providing them an equal chance and they are not been given the basic facilities to even clean themselves," the bench said.

Justice Mishra also questioned whether the practice of untouchability, which was abolished by the Constitution, has stopped.

"Despite the Constitution abolishing untouchability in the country, I am asking all of you, will any of you shake hands with them? The answer is no. That is the way we are going on. The condition must improve. We have moved 70 years since Independence but these things are still happening," Justice Mishra said.

Agreeing with the observation, Venugopal said the caste system is embedded in the country despite the Constitution saying that there should not be any discrimination on the basis of religion, caste and creed.

The apex court made these scathing observations while it was hearing the Centre's plea seeking review of its last year's verdict which had virtually diluted the provisions of arrest under the SC/ST Act.

The bench reserved its verdict on the review plea filed by the Centre against the March 20 last year verdict delivered by a two-judge bench of the apex court.

Source: Economic Times



No Caste Left Behind at the European Development Days

An IDSN delegation with Dalit human rights defenders from Nepal, India and Bangladesh made its mark on the European Development Days 2019, with a stand in the Global Village and participation in key sessions. The event also saw the launch of IDSN's #NoCasteLeftBehind initiative with participants joining hands to fight caste discrimination. After the European Development Days, the delegation also met with key EU officials, including the new EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Eamon Gilmore.

The European Development Days 2019 brought together over eight thousand participants from all over the world to discuss the theme Addressing inequalities: Building a world which leaves no one behind. At the IDSN #NoCasteLeftBehind stand participants could meet and speak to Dalit human rights defenders and learn more about how to take action to fight caste discrimination and ensure that Dalits are not left behind in the Global Goals. At the stand participants could take a photo to join hands to end caste discrimination and take a quiz on caste and the Global Goals - the quiz is still open and can be taken here.

The stand was busy with people wanting to learn about caste and engage in dialogues with the Dalit human rights defenders. Nobel Peace Prize winner Kailash Satyarthi, also paid a visit to talk about issues of child labour and education in relation to caste and to have his photo taken to join hands to end caste discrimination. There was a lot of activity on IDSN's Facebook and Twitter - see some of the photos of participants at the IDSN stand at the end of this article.

The IDSN delegation also took part in several debates, labs and plenary sessions. Ashif Sheik of IDSN member organisation Jan Sahas was on the panel for the European External Action Service lab event on Non-discrimination. Ashif speaking about manual scavenging in India and IDSN delegate from Bangladesh, Tamanna, making a statement at this event about access to water and sanitation for Dalits in Bangladesh. Durga Sob from Nepal also spoke up about the situation of Dalit women in Nepal.

After the successful IDSN participation at the EDD19 there were several meetings with key EU officials. Among others, the delegation met with the new EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Eamon Gilmore, who was very much engaged in how to support the struggle to end caste discrimination. He was briefed on the situation in caste-affected countries. Following the many meetings in Brussels the IDSN #NoCasteLeftBehind team travelled on to Geneva to take part in the 41st session of the UN Human Rights Council.



Source: IDSN

Political Mobilisation of the Lower Castes in India: The Role of the Scheduled Castes



A word on words to begin with. India's so called lower castes are not lower and lesser as human beings, but treated lower by India's Hindu Social Order. We will use the lower caste as a political, social and economic category. According Hindu Caste system, the SCs, STs and the OBCs can be aggregated as the lower castes. The political mobilisation is a must for these classes to get their social, political and economic rights.

They are not represented proportionally in social, economic and political spheres. India is a representative democracy and hence all the classes should be proportionately represented in all the spheres. If they are not, then the state should strive to create a commonwealth of all the communities through various schemes, policies and mechanism. But the state is not neutral, the state is run by the political parties. The political parties are the voluntary organisations which try to secure the interest of the people they might represent. Therefore, the political parties must be linked with the people and their interests and their needs.

The political parties are formed by the people coming together with certain interest and try to get control of the state to work for their constituencies.

In India, being a political democracy, the political parties are the only route to the state and its machinery. Many political parties are formed since the process of representations began in India. The competitive politics began since 1935 when the Government of India decided to give representation to the Indians. The Indian National Congress began with a demand for representation of Indians in the

civil services in 1885.

It was the organised forum which later took advantage of the election process and party politics. But, it was not the only political party in India. Even the British India, political parties that represented the interests of the farmers, the political parties that represented the interests of the Muslims (Muslim League) and the political parties that represented the interests of the Scheduled castes (All India Scheduled Castes Federation, AISCF). India also saw political initiatives emerging from the Indian National Congress as well, including some of the members of it formed the saffron-tinged political entities.

The various parties represented the interests of their stakeholders. The Muslim League went to become a stronger force for the Muslims leading up to the partition of India in 1947. India also saw the rise of the regional parties and in the recent decades, India saw the rise of political parties with a particular caste forming the core of it. The core around which the parties are built remains the main constituency. For example, the BJP was formed by the RSS, which is formed by the Brahmins and hence they represent the interest of the Brahmins.

However, India's lower caste never saw a pan-India political party of the consolidated lower castes that included SCs, STs and OBCs. The BSP attempted to that starting with the core consolidation of India's Dalits and then extending it to MBCs, OBCs and then to everyone. The project has a partial success and it was not a total success. In the heydays of the BSP, it saw people from various lower caste joining it en masse.

Political party means involvement of people on

regular basis, maybe day to day basis. For that, the political party does not need to be in power. The contact with the people is the essence of the political party. If the party loses the regular interaction with the people, it is bound to die. This involvement of the people can take any form. It can take the form of thinking together, sharing and creating opinions, writing and submitting reports, responding to the state's policies if they are not in the interest of the constituency that the party represents.

People are the essence of the political parties and political mobilisation. It is true for all the political parties. Now that the Scheduled Castes are ready for the mobilisation, the party structure should take advantage of the situation and establish contacts with them. The party of the lower castes will try to establish contacts with all the movements of the lower castes. In the recent years, India saw mass movements by the Scheduled castes all over India. India is witnessing the movement of the farmers (who are lower castes). India witnessed the movements by the Shudra/OBC castes in many states. The Muslims are agitating in India. However, there is no initiative from the parties led by the lower castes.

The regional parties led by the OBCs cannot have an All India presence because they rally around particular castes. In the absence of the national party that can take advantage of these movements, the movements fizzle out without gaining anything worthwhile. There is a vacuum, a big political vacuum where the like-minded organisations, both Non-Governmental Organisations and people's movements can step in. Judging by what is happening around in the world, the people's opinions can be changed with the speed that was unimaginable in the past.

As the communication is becoming faster, the spread of ideas are becoming even faster. The evidence are in front of us. The recent elections in the UK were dramatic and the way Labour came back to a strong position is amazing. More interesting is the rise of Macron, the French President and his party which is just 14 months old. The opinions can be changed as the media to communicate have multiplied and also become fast. Going back to the "Engineering of Consent", the paper that stipulates how the consent can be engineered, it needs some fresh reading and

the rise of social media must be factored in to make sense of it.

The SCs in India have always been vocal against the discrimination based on the caste. They fought the battle for the OBCs to gain the reservation for them. They have fought tooth and nail against every oppression and they have shown the way to the other Indians to the viable solutions which are peaceful and democratic. They are emerging as India's intellectual class and the rise is Himalayan. Though there is a lot to be done, the possibilities for their mobilisation on national level has increased manifold due to very many reasons, one of the reasons is the growing interaction between them throughout India which may enable them to perhaps transcend the regional caste identities and forge a national, perhaps universal community, that can fight for discrimination in any and every form.



The tone is set by Babasaheb Ambedkar, who chose "Human being (Manus)" as the symbol of his first political party. When the humanity (Manuski) is in danger, the best stay forward will be to back to basics of Ambedkarism and bringing human beings and their liberty, equality and fraternity right at the centre of such political mobilisation. This mobilisation is the only way for India to realise its manifest destiny that it will lead the world to peace and democracy through its own practice and commitment to peace and democracy. In the caste-based society, the destiny is impossible to achieve and in reality, it is an antithesis of founding principles of People's Republic, that is, Bharat!

Author - Mangesh Dahiwale, Human Rights Activist

'They want to erase us': the Kashmiri suburb defying Indian control

Civilians in the Srinagar suburb of Anchar say they are engaged in a fight for existence

Azhar Farooq in Srinagar

Prayers had barely finished when the teargas was fired and a trail of smoke arched in the sky. Security forces had launched another assault on Anchar, the only major pocket of resistance in Kashmir.

"Others have only heard the word doomsday, we have lived a doomsday," said Fazi, a grandmother who lives in Anchar, a suburb of Kashmir's main city, Srinagar, situated on the banks of a lake of the same name.

Teargas and pellets were fired into a park near to the shrine where crowds were attending prayers, she said. Residents rushed to the frontline on Anchar's outskirts, barely 500 metres away, to push back against security forces. She said the assault, on 30 August, lasted five hours.

"It was like rain. There were pellets everywhere, smoke everywhere," she said. "We have no weapons. We have only God's name and God will do justice with us."

It is now more than five weeks since the Indian government revoked the autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir and placed the state under strict lockdown. Many Kashmiris fear that their way of life in India's only Muslim-majority state is at risk. A heavy troop presence, a communication blackout and widespread



detentions have mostly prevented large protests.

Paramilitaries control every inch of Srinagar, except Anchar. Residents, mostly creative artisans who weave pashmina shawls, have used JCBs to dig trenches around the neighbourhood. Tin sheets, waste containers, mesh wires and logs have been placed as barricades. At night, teams keep watch to spot if security forces are approaching.

It is thought to be the first time in recent decades that civilians in Kashmir have prevented Indian paramilitaries and local police from entering an area. Entire families join in with the efforts. "When we throw a stone, our women are always there to give us a stone," said one man.

"We do it for three reasons," said Mohammad Subhan, in his early 50s, who was among those who took part in the night watch. "One, so the youth are not detained. Two, so our homes are not ransacked. Three, so the honour of our daughters and women is not violated."

Subhan's wife and four daughters were at the shrine of Jenab Sahab when the assault began. Like many women, Saima, 22, the eldest daughter, ran to help those defending Anchar.

"It is the women who do all the logistics work: they gather the stones, they bring us the water, they bring us salt," said one man. "It would be impossible to fight without their support." Saltwater is used to counter the effect of teargas.

Saima and two of her sisters - 14-year-old Maysara

and 12-year-old Qurat were wounded by pellets during the assault. A metal pellet pierced Maysara's eye. She was smuggled to her aunt's home elsewhere in Srinagar and underwent treatment in hospital.

Qurat was wounded in the head. Saima was hit on the neck and arms. "First I felt like hot sand was thrown on me and then I felt my neck is burning," said Saima.

She was treated at the shrine late in the evening by doctors who had been smuggled into the neighbourhood. They administered painkillers and injections to prevent infections.

"I don't know how [Maysara] is, whether she is still admitted or she has been discharged," said Subhan. The communications blackout means people have no idea if their relatives are safe.

Fazi's 22-year-old grandson, Bilal, was blinded in his right eye by a pellet. "The bleeding was not stopping, so we sent him to the hospital but doctors said they cannot save his eye," said Bilal's father, Mohammad Ramzan. "The doctors recommended that we should take him to a specialised eye hospital outside Kashmir."

He was smuggled out of the city. Ramzan has no idea where his son is or if he is safe.

Phone and internet services were suspended last month when the government in Delhi made its revocation announcement. Some landlines have since been restored but these remain unreliable. Few in Kashmir know about the scale of events in Anchar and few in Anchar dare to leave their neighbourhood.

Elsewhere in Srinagar, markets remain shut an act of defiance on the part of workers, who refuse to comply with the Delhi government's claim that everything in the region is returning to normal. Public transport also remains shut.

The revocation of Kashmir's special status stripped the region of its constitution and flag. Rules that prevented outsiders from buying land in the territory also disappeared.

In Anchar, posters of fighters are pasted across shuttered shops. "Don't call them militants," a young man said. "They are mujahideen, they fight for our cause." Many believe these fighters are their only

source of hope in the wake of Delhi's decision.

The Indian government has said its actions will rid the state of terrorism and bring development. It maintains that the situation remains calm.

"They say things are normal. What normalcy is this?" said Subhan. "They have shut our main mosques. Jamia Masjid is locked. If this is just the beginning, what will they do afterwards?"

He said he would continue to take part in the night watch. "Anchar is fighting for all of Kashmir," he said.



At night-time, groups of youths are stationed along routes into the city. "When the alarm is raised, everyone comes to defend this place," a college student said at his home where he was recovering from pellet injuries.

More than 100 pellets were lodged in his body, neck and head, he said. "It was very painful. When I was hit it was like a hundred needles had pricked me."

Khatija, his mother, said her heart trembled every night as she feared another raid. "God should now have mercy on us," she said.

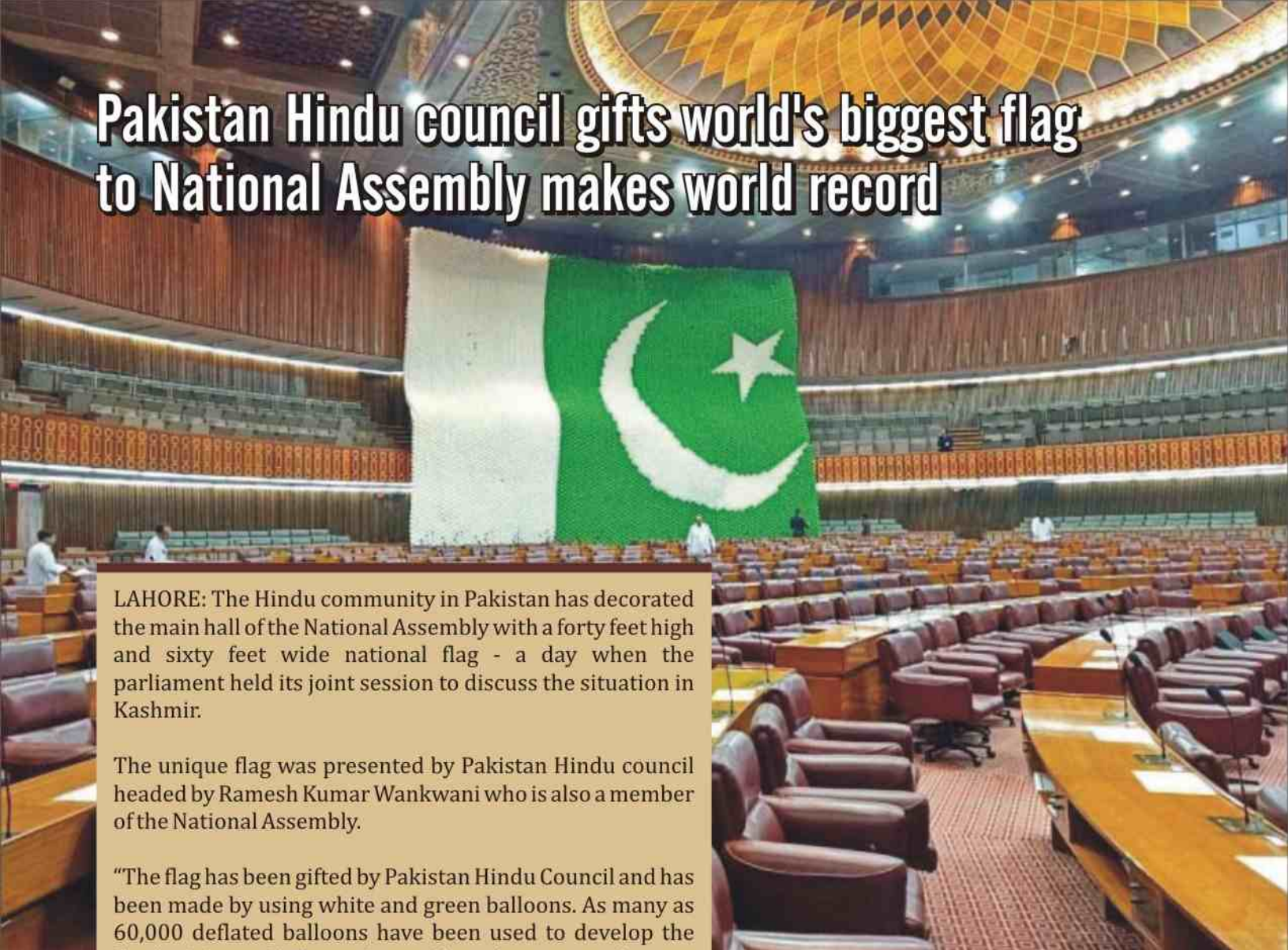
Khatija's elder son, a 24-year-old shawl weaver who regularly attends the night guard, said people came out of their houses "like bees" when the alarm of an incoming raid was raised. "We are like one family here, like a folded hand," he said.

He described Anchar's resistance as a "fight for existence", adding: "We are fighting for haqq [truth], we are fighting for azadi [freedom]."

He added: "They want to erase us; they want to erase our history. We will not let that happen."

Source: The Guardian

Pakistan Hindu council gifts world's biggest flag to National Assembly makes world record



LAHORE: The Hindu community in Pakistan has decorated the main hall of the National Assembly with a forty feet high and sixty feet wide national flag - a day when the parliament held its joint session to discuss the situation in Kashmir.

The unique flag was presented by Pakistan Hindu council headed by Ramesh Kumar Wankwani who is also a member of the National Assembly.

"The flag has been gifted by Pakistan Hindu Council and has been made by using white and green balloons. As many as 60,000 deflated balloons have been used to develop the flag," ministry of information and broadcast tweeted.

"It is the first time in the history of any country that such a huge flag has been prepared and displayed in any legislature. It is the biggest of its kind in the world and all set to register a record in the Guinness Book of World Records. The Guinness team will present certificate," Wankwani told Arab News.

Asad Qaisar, speaker of the National Assembly, termed it a good sign of minority community's love for the country.

Wankwani said that the Hindu community living in Pakistan assisted the founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and opted to live in this country. "Political figures like Jogarnath Mandal and SP Singh were companions of Jinnah in his struggle," he said.

"This flag is a gift and a testimony of love of the Hindu community for Pakistan," Wankwani said.

Source: Arab News



Why the world must confront the caste system

With nearly 4 million pending cases in its court systems, India has probably one of the busiest judiciaries in the world. Yet every now and then, a local court case makes international headlines. This happened recently when a court in Kerala sentenced 10 men to life in prison for killing a man.

The crime had all the hallmarks of an honor killing. A young man, a Dalit from a low caste, falls in love with a woman from a high-caste family. They plan to marry, but the girl's family learns about it and opposes their union. When the couple files for a marriage certificate, the family decides to take action and dispatches a hit team to get rid of the soon-to-be husband. Shortly after, the young man's body is found in a stream.



Crimes of this nature have become so disturbingly common that the world barely bats an eye when they happen. But in America, which is predominantly Christian, the reaction is often, It's just another one of those Hindu family fights over old religious traditions.

Except that wasn't the case this time. Both the young

man and the woman were Christians and came from Christian families.

Caste prejudice - the idea that some people are inferior or even untouchable because of their low birth - has not only survived throughout millennia, robbing millions of people of their humanity. It also has metastasized and spread beyond its original religious confines.

Caste prejudice and hatred exists among Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs and, yes, among Christians, too. And it exists between religions. In another recent case, a Dalit Christian man was killed by hit men hired by his wife's father, the patriarch of an upper-caste Hindu family. The father ordered his son-in-law's murder, despite knowing his daughter was pregnant.

The caste system has plagued India and South Asia for centuries, but it hasn't remained isolated to the region. It has been exported overseas to America, Europe, Africa, Australia and other parts of the world. There have been incidents of caste-incited killings among Sikhs in Austria and Canada. In America, a recent survey found caste prejudice exists in the South Asian communities, manifesting itself in workplace and education discrimination.

The caste system persists to this day because India has failed to abolish it by law. While the Indian Constitution outlawed "untouchability" - the practice of physically marginalizing Dalits and low-castes from social activities such as sharing eating utensils, entering temples, drinking water from the same well or marrying people from higher castes - it did not find a way to make the caste system itself

illegal. Today, India is paying for this failure.

India has grown into the largest democracy in the world. Yet even as it becomes one of the top economies on the planet, it continues to struggle to form a cohesive national identity. The caste system has handicapped India's development, divided its citizenry, stoked religious tensions and consigned hundreds of millions of Indians to severe poverty. It's one of the forces behind India's income inequality, which is the highest in the world. Nearly one third of India's population lives below the poverty line.

Abolishing the caste system is the unfinished job the Indian parliament needs to accomplish. The problem is that any attempt to get rid of it evokes massive opposition from many upper-caste groups and politicians. In some parts of the country, politicians turn a blind eye toward crimes against Dalits because they don't want to lose the patronage of the upper caste elites.

Even in the U.K., where the Dalits wanted the caste system to be brought under the ambit of the equality law, the rich and powerful upper-caste lobby managed to get former Prime Minister Theresa May's government to withdraw a bill that would have outlawed caste discrimination.

Despite being a minority, the upper-caste community imposes this system, socially and economically, on the majority population. Studies have found that India's upper castes own 41% of the country's wealth. The sad truth is that this system will not be completely eradicated until those at the top rise up against it. Like Abraham Lincoln and William Wilberforce's efforts to abolish slavery in America and England, India needs its own social movement launched and led by upper castes to dismantle the caste system.



Even though caste-ism is not the same as racism, the Dalits are not unjustified when they say that it is actually worse. The sheer size and longevity of the inhuman oppression, exploitation and violence unleashed against them makes it one of the biggest human rights issues of our time.

The fight against caste discrimination also should bring together India's religious leaders - Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists. For as long as the caste system is in place, there will not be economic, social or religious equality. And as long as it's perpetuated by unscrupulous politicians - such as the speaker of the lower house of India's parliament who last week said Brahmins are superior - the deep-seated prejudice against low castes will remain.

The caste system has oppressed millions of men, women, and children for more than 2,000 years. It's time to abolish it.

Joseph D'Souza is founder of Dignity Freedom Network, archbishop of the Anglican Good Shepherd Church of India, and the president of the All-India Christian Council.

Source: Washington Examiner



▶ Assam, the first mass detention center for "illegal" citizens is under construction



The camp consists of 15 four-storey buildings, schools and a hospital. The area chosen by the government is West Matia, in the district of Goalpara. The camp will host 3 thousand people, among the 1.9 million excluded from the National Register of Citizens. The nightmare of losing citizenship has already forced 51 people to commit suicide.

The construction of the first mass detention center for **those excluded from the National Register of Citizens in Assam is "well under way"**. This is assured by the engineers who are completing 15 four-storey buildings, schools, a hospital, an auditorium and 180 bathrooms. The first Indian camp for citizens declared "illegal" is rising on 2.5 hectares in West Matia, in the district of Goalpara, about 150 km from the capital Guwahati.

Rabin Das, one of the builders, reports that the building "will be ready by the end of this year". The camp will host about 3 thousand people and will also have an area reserved for security forces. India has allocated 460 million rupees (5.8 million euros) for the project.

The construction work is entrusted to Assam Police Housing Corporation Limited. Work started on the camp in December 2018 and in the coming months the laying of the first stone of nine other similar residences is planned.

Government officials reassure the population that the center will not "be like a prison". G Kishan Reddy, Union Minister for Internal Affairs of States, guarantees that "special attention will be given to women with children and pregnant women. Children housed in detention centers will have educational facilities".

On 31 August, the Assam authorities published the list of those whose citizenship is recognized in the Indian state. The excluded from the National Register of Citizens (NCR) were 1.9 million, while in a first census

there were four million; all of them are granted a 120-day extension to present new documents. At the end of this period, it is not yet clear what decisions will be taken.

In essence, the inhabitants must "prove" that they reside in the state at least since March 24, 1971, a few months before Bangladesh became independent. According to the authorities, since that year India has been invaded by millions of Bengali migrants, who therefore have no right of residence. **Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself, re-elected for a second term** in May this year, led a heated campaign against illegal immigration, making it one of his flagships.

In recent months the population has likened the census to a "witch hunt" and claims that the government's only objective is to rebalance the ethnic-religious composition of the State, **which fears an invasion similar to that of the Rohingya**. Here, one third of the residents (out of a total of 32 million inhabitants) profess the Islamic religion, unlike the rest of the country which has a Hindu majority. Millions are tribal, most illiterate, who often do not have birth certificates to present at checks.

The fear of losing the right of residence, being forced to leave their homes and being locked up in what are considered concentration camps in all respects, has thrown dozens of people into desperation. The NGO Citizens for Justice and Peace, which is helping the population compile documents, has recorded at least 51 suicides from people living with "trauma and stress" at the nightmare of losing citizenship.

Sarojini Hajong is one of the excluded from the list of citizens. He declares to the *Ndtv* Indian newspaper: "I am afraid of not being able to prove my citizenship and ending up in detention. What will happen next? We will all suffer in my family, from my children to my elderly mother to my sick wife".

Source: Asia News.It

Sisters of the Holy Spirit "revolutionise" the life of 10,000 people in Rajasthan tribal villages



In 2011 the Missionary Servants of the Holy Spirit opened the mission in Goeka Baria, which includes eight villages. They taught irrigation and new crops, created support groups for women, and taught personal hygiene. Local leaders accused them of religious conversions but change their minds when they saw that their work was beneficial.

A group of Indian nuns has "revolutionized the life" of some Bhil ethnic villages in the State of Rajasthan.

They helped build a school and a dispensary, repaired and deepened 85 wells, introduced cutting-edge irrigation technologies and new crops, helped women who wouldn't recognise each other form self-help groups, promoted personal hygiene and helped reduce child mortality.

The sisters belong to the Missionary Servants of the Holy Spirit in the Diocese of Udaipur. In 2011 they started the Child Focused Community Development Project at Goeka Baria, a mission that covers a total of eight villages in Sajjangarh, a block (subdivision) in Banswara district, where 95 per cent of the population is Hindu and Muslim.

In all, the nuns helped about 10,000 people from tribal communities. They encouraged water and micro-credit projects, supported biodiversity, taught how to plan the harvest and introduced new plants and seeds, countered migration, in particular towards the more industrialised Gujarat, as well as "social evils" that have kept women subjugated, like child marriages.

When they arrived, people "lived in unhygienic and subhuman conditions and could not send their children to schools," Sr Jaisa Antony said. One of the main problems was the lack of water. The nuns

helped repair the local bunds (dykes) and showed people how to store rainwater.

Working with the Krishi Vigyan Kendra, an agricultural science centre in Banswara, they experimented with new crops such as corn, chickpeas, vegetables and rice, where only wheat was grown.

Another problem they tackled was gender discrimination. Deemed inferior, local women were forced to cover their faces, couldn't look at others in the face, and had to give birth at home.

The sisters convinced 900 women to join 72 self-help groups and organised courses for tailoring, bamboo work, poultry farming and goat rearing.

Kamala Devi, 32, is one of those who now earn 4,000 rupees (US\$ 55) a month as a seamstress. She has been able to save some money for her children's education.

"Before the sisters arrived, we recognised each other just looking at the feet, the edge of the sari, or the tone of the voice. Today we smile," she said.

Krishna Chandra, a retired teacher who lives in Goeka Pargi, says the Sisters' work encountered several obstacles.

"Some local leaders tried to oppose the nuns' work, saying it was a façade for religious conversion," she explained. But "As people began to experience the benefit of the sisters' work, their opponents did not succeed," he added.

Source: Asia News.It

Nepal can lead Dalit empowerment movement, says Indian rights activist



Indian Scholar and rights activist Suraj Yengde said that Nepal could take a lead role in Dalit empowerment as it had acknowledged at the United Nations that discrimination against Dalits was a problem.

Yengde, who was born in a slum of Maharashtra, but was lucky enough to get the opportunity to pursue higher studies at Harvard University, said countries where caste discrimination still existed needed to take more affirmative actions to achieve the goals of Dalit empowerment.

Yengde is a Shorenstein Centre post-doctoral fellow, Harvard Kennedy School.

"Had there been no reservation policies in India, I would not have got a chance to go to a university in India, let alone Harvard University," Yengde said, showing a picture of his tin roof house in which he was born and brought up.

He said if he had not got fellowship to study, he would have turned to drugs or crime.

He said it was important for a society to acknowledge caste-based discrimination if it really wanted to end the ill practice. "Acknowledgement of a problem is the key to resolving it. Unlike the Government of India, Nepal government has internationally acknowledged discrimination against Dalits being a problem and I think Nepal can lead international efforts to bring Dalits on par with other communities," he said.



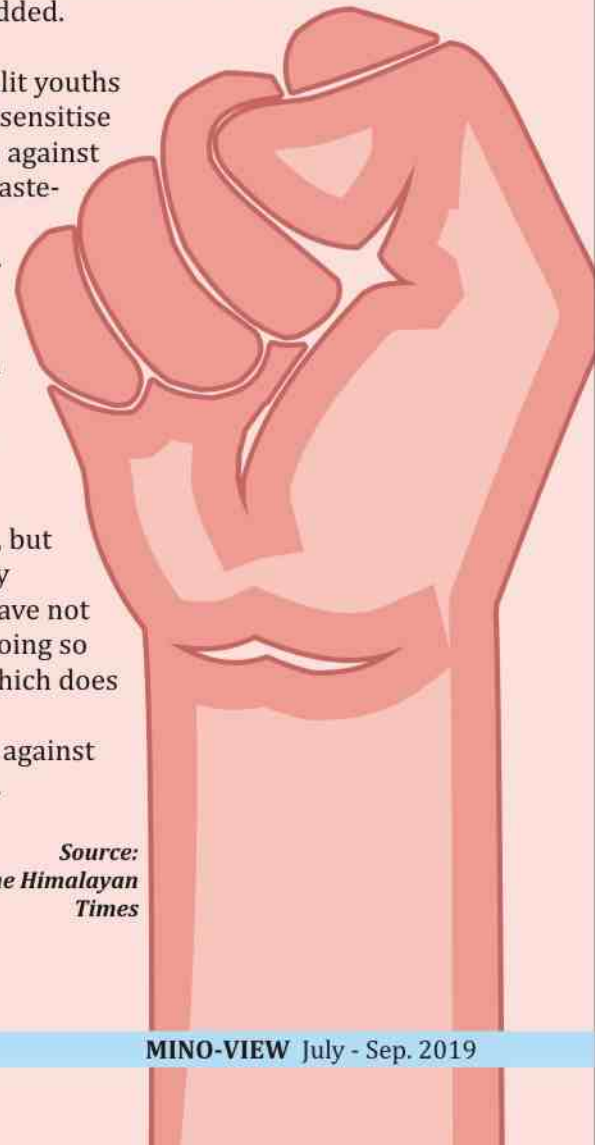
Yengde said an international network could be created where issues of caste and racial discrimination could be discussed and collective efforts could be initiated to end all sorts of discrimination.

He also said that the dominant caste people, who recognised caste-based discrimination as an evil, themselves were not doing enough to root out caste-based discrimination. "Just an individual refraining from bad practice cannot change society. To bring about radical change in society, every learned individual should tell others to refrain from bad practices," he added.

Yengde said Dalit youths also needed to sensitise their own folks against the prevalent caste-based discrimination.

"Governments have adopted a number of policies in this region to end caste-based discrimination, but one reason why these policies have not succeeded in doing so is Hinduism, which does not denounce discrimination against Dalits," he said.

Source:
The Himalayan Times



88

manual scavenging deaths in 3 years



The number of deaths of sanitation workers while cleaning septic tanks and sewers has risen, despite a ban on manual scavenging, with 620 cases reported since 1993, of which 88 occurred in the past three years, according to the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry. To a question by MPs Asaduddin Owaisi and Syed Imtiaz Jaleel, Social Justice and Empowerment Minister of State Ramdas Athawale told the Lok Sabha that compensation had been given in 445 cases, partial settlement in 58 cases, while 117 cases were pending.

In 445 cases the full amount had been paid, while partial compensation had been given in 58 cases, the reply said. Of the 15 States and Union Territories that submitted details to the Ministry, Tamil Nadu had the highest number of sewer deaths with 144 cases, followed by Gujarat with 131. Of the 88 cases reported in 2017, 2018 and 2019, till June 14, compensation was pending in 52 cases.

The MPs had questioned the government over whether it planned on amending the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 in order to make it mandatory for States to report such cases. In response, the Minister said the Act had laid down a mechanism of monitoring its implementation through vigilance committees and monitoring committees at different levels, so there was “no proposal” to amend it as of now. On the data of 15

States and Union Territories, a senior official said “some States had not reported and some had reported nil”, leading to the possibility of the actual deaths from manual scavenging being higher. A Supreme Court order from March 27, 2014 makes it mandatory for the government to identify all those who died in sewerage work since 1993 and provide ₹10 lakh each as compensation to their families.



In another reply to a question by MP Vishnu Dayal Ram, the minister told the Lok Sabha that 53,598 manual scavengers had been identified from December 6, 2013 till June 30, 2019. While the Act says no one can employ a person for manual scavenging and lays down punishments for those who do, the minister said “there have been no reports from any state/Union Territory regarding conviction in such cases”.

Source: The Hindu

Jharkhand, Hindu radicals devastate a Jesuit college. 'Completely destroyed'

The St. John Berchmans Inter College in Mundli was destroyed and raided by a crowd of 500 people. The pretext of the attack was a quarrel between students and tribal boys hosted in the hostel adjacent to the school. The management asks for help from the National Commission for Human Rights and the Commission for Minorities.

A Jesuit-run Catholic school in Jharkhand was devastated last week by a crowd of 500 people, presumed radical Hindu nationalists and no one intervened to bring the culprits to justice

The incident was denounced by Fr. Thomas Kuzhively, secretary of the institute, who yesterday released an official statement condemning the inertia of government authorities. The school is the St. John Berchmans Inter College of Mundli and is run by the Jesuits of the Dumka-Raiganj province. The priest complains: "Everything is destroyed. We can't reopen college".

The school leadership appeals to the governor of Jharkhand, the Chief minister and the presidents of the National Commission for Human Rights and the National Commission for Minorities. The incident took place last September 3, in a long sequence of discriminatory acts against the state's Christian minority.



According to Fr. Kuzhively, unleashing the fury of Hindu activists would have been a quarrel between some students living in the adjacent hostel, which is home to tribal youth. "Why - he asks - was no one arrested after eight days? Is this not letting these antisocial elements take over, being passive [to their] cynical activities?"

The secretary said the crowd showed up at the college



armed with sticks, chains, iron clubs, knives and guns. Then they selected the tribal students of the Loyola Adivasi Hostel and beat them fiercely. Two of them suffered serious injuries and were saved only thanks to the intervention of the sisters who came between the attacked and the criminals. The crowd also tried to block the ambulance called to transport the injured to the hospital.

Fr. Nobor Bilung, the principal, tried to calm people, but "he just managed to dodge a blow on the head. The crowd was in no condition to listen to anyone. "The attackers shattered the windows, bent the fan blades on the ceiling, damaged the exhaust pipes, the furniture, the electrical panels and the stereo system.

After devastating the school, they went on to the hostel, destroying CCTVs, bulletin boards, chairs, benches, pictures hanging on the wall and everything they encountered on their way.

"Not satisfied," he adds, they tried to harass the sisters and the girls; finally they broke into the veranda where some motorcycles were parked, smashing them into pieces; then they stole three used phones from the hostel's kids and the money stored in the principal's office. The estimated damage of the entire devastation amounts to 1.5 million rupees (19 thousand euros).

Even the policemen from the Tinpahar station were not spared from the crowd's fury: some of them were injured, including a deputy inspector, after stopping a group of rioters. "It is obvious - concludes Fr. Kuzhively - that someone from outside fomented them".

Source: Asia News



Sir Ganga Ram Heritage Foundation