

Report regarding the visit of NCM team to Bisahda village, Distt. Gautam Budha Nagar (U.P) on 15.10.2015

A team of the National Commission for Minorities led by its Chairman, Shri Naseem Ahmad, and members Shri T.N.Shanoo and Ms. Farida Abdulla Khan visited village Bisahda (Distt. Gautam Budha Nagar, U.P.) to assess the situation in the village and also the progress of the investigation into the incidents of the 28th September, 2015.

Meeting at Dadri:

The team first stopped at the Guest House of NTPC, Dadri and held a meeting with the district administration, where the NCM team was given a report of the incidents of 28.09.15 which led to the killing of Shri Akhlaque Ahmad, grave injuries to his son Danish and injuries to other members of the family who were present in the house that night. Chairman, NCM expressed anguish on the delay in submission of report by the district authorities on the asking of the Commission. Present at this meeting were the D.M. Shri N.P. Singh, SSP Shri Kiran S., SDM Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh and Circle Officer of Police (Dadri) Shri. Anurag Singh. After narrating the sequence of happenings in the fateful night, the administration also gave an account of the steps being taken to:

1. Protect the minority population of the village;
2. To ensure the safety and medical care of the victims i.e members of deceased Akhlaque's family;
3. To ensure that police investigations are quickly concluded so that the guilty could be brought to book; and

4 To restore peace and communal harmony in the village as well as in surrounding areas where this heinous incident is causing apprehensions within the Muslim community.

The version of happenings on the night between 28-29 September, 2015 given by the district authorities was similar to what has been reported in the media. They stated that no tensions were apparent in the village prior to this incident and , therefore, they were taken totally by surprise. The incident took place at night and by the time the police reached the place of occurrence, Shri Akhlaque was too grievously injured to be saved. According to them, the police reached the spot within half an hour of receiving the information on phone. This version of the facts was corroborated by other residents of the village as well as by members of the victims' family.

An FIR was subsequently lodged and police investigations under the charge of Circle Officer are continuing. Since there are several eye-witnesses, and most of the culprits have been identified, the Commission expressed its expectation that the police investigation would be concluded quickly so that charge sheet could be filed and the judicial process commenced. The NCM team was also informed that out of ten culprits named in the FIR nine persons have already been arrested. The district authorities further reported that after this incident rumours concerning the killing of cow were instigated at two other places and there was an attempt to gather people and to incite them, but the police in both cases responded instantly, established that there was no truth in either of them and did not allow the situation to escalate. The first of these rumour mongering was at Village Chitehra (P.S.Dadri) and the second one in Kudi Khera village (P.S.Badalpur).

Noted
The Supdt. of Police stated that recording of statements of witnesses was taking some time because eye witnesses are members of Shri Akhlaque's family who were not in a state to be questioned immediately, especially Danish (Shri Akhlaque's son) who is still in the ICU in an Army Hospital in Delhi.

The district administration also reported that the villagers have been brought together for several peace meetings and efforts were being made to rebuild the trust between the communities. Such peace meetings have also been arranged in surrounding villages.

The Chairman, NCM advised that providing security to the Muslim families in the village at this time was paramount and also that all efforts have to be made to expedite the police investigations so that the guilty are brought to book quickly. He also emphasised that all assistance to the victim's family has to be provided whether it is legal, material or emotional. He also cautioned the administration and especially the Police to be extra vigilant in the district especially in light of the efforts to instigate violence that have already been reported from two other villages. The NCM team was informed that the State Government has already given a compensation of Rs. 30 lakh to the family of deceased Shri Akhlaque, besides Rs. 5 lakh each to the three brothers of Shri Akhlaque. Further, the State Government was bearing the expenses of treatment of Danish s/o Late Shri Akhlaque.

Visit to Bisahda Village:

Thereafter, the NCM team visited the village Bisahda and met the immediate family of Shri Akhlaque as well as his brothers who live next door. The team members talked to the family at some length and they confirmed that there had been no previous tensions and that their neighbours had visited them on last Eid as usual. They claimed that the attack was sudden and vicious and that the men were particularly and brutally targeted but women were also assaulted and injured in the attack. They were, however, all praise for the help provided by the administration.

The team feels that a crowd of large numbers appearing within minutes of the announcement from temple's loudspeaker and at a time when most villagers claimed they were asleep seems to point to some pre-meditated planning.

The NCM team also met three brothers of deceased Akhlaque who were visibly shaken and stated that they were feeling highly vulnerable. Although right now there is a strong police presence in the village and the administration has given all assurances, they are feeling insecure and are keen to move out of the village. Same fear were also expressed by Shri Akhlaque's family. In fact, they have already shifted their belongings to some other place. At the time of team's visit to Shri Akhlaque's house, the team could see only bare cots with no household goods in the house. The NCM team thereafter met the members of the majority community in the neighbouring house of Shri Rajinder Singh where several persons were present, including two brothers of Shri Akhlaque. The community expressed its regret over the shameful incident and claimed that no such incident had ever occurred in the village in the past. The present Pradhan and an ex-Pradhan were present at this meeting and assured the team that they were determined to see that justice was done and that the guilty were punished. They were also willing to re-assure the Muslims in the village that they would do their best to prevent any such incident from happening. However, the brothers of Shri Akhlaque felt that such a guarantee was difficult to be ensured in the light of what had happened. From the side of the majority community it was also stated that one instance of their sincerity in the matter was the initiative taken by them in making elaborate arrangements at their cost during the marriage of two Muslim girls of the village after the unfortunate incident.

Recommendations:

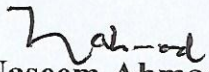
1. It would be quite an under - statement to say that Bisahda killing was merely an accident, as has been claimed even by some persons in authority. The facts as reported to NCM team point strongly that the whole episode was the result of a planning, in which a

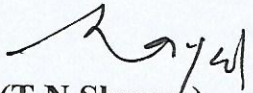
sacred place like a temple was used for exhorting people of one community to attack a hapless family. Moral policing with impunity is being resorted to at many places. The malaise is spreading fast, especially in Western Uttar Pradesh. What is more disturbing is that responsible persons converge at the place of any such incident and make irresponsible statements which further vitiates the relations between the communities. This has to be stopped at all costs; otherwise things will go out of hand. It seems that intelligence gathering is no more occurring in the rule book of the authorities. It has to be revived with utmost sincerity if we are really interested in restoring communal amity. It is an issue on which both the central and state authorities are to work in tandem without blaming each other.

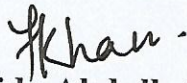
2. Without waiting for such incidents to happen again at other places, sensitization of people of various communities through inter-faith dialogue is required to be put in place by activating peace committees. Although it is something which has to come from the civil society, the state machinery needs to get involved in such an initiative. Sooner it is done, the better.
3. As already stated, the families of deceased Mohd. Akhlaque and his three brothers have already shifted out of Bisahda because of fear and trauma. Although the people of majority community are now assuring that they will ensure their safety, the victims are not convinced. There are media reports that the state government was contemplating to provide a house each to the four affected families somewhere in Noida. The gravity of the situation has already been gauged by the state authorities by providing enhanced monetary compensation. Providing dwelling units to the four affected families will, therefore, further prove their resolve to help the victims lead a life without fear.

Rehman

4. Social media are being extensively used to flare up communal passions. Some form of vigilance and curb on such hateful attempts is the need of the hour.
5. Police investigations regarding the incident need to be completed expeditiously so that the culprits are brought to book and dealt as per law. The long arms of the law must prevail.
6. All the political establishments need to counsel their cadres and sympathisers to desist from making irresponsible statements and making capital out of such outrages.
7. The state Government of U.P. should advise the concerned authorities to respond quickly to this Commission as and when a report regarding such happenings is sought from them.


(Naseem Ahmad)
Chairperson
19.10.2015


(T.N. Shanoo)
Member
19.10.15


(Farida Abdulla Khan)
Member
19/10/2015