

## Minority panel pulls up administration for UP riots

NEW DELHI: The Jat mahapanchayat at Nangla Mandaur in Muzaffarnagar — the epicentre of communal tension culminating in riots — should not have been allowed, said the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) in its report. The observation was made after a team, led by NCM chairman Wajahat Habibullah, visited riot-ravaged Muzaffarnagar and Shamli districts of western UP.

The NCM rapped the administration for not being able to control the riots and pointed out the erosion of confidence of the people in the state police.

"The administration was at pains to explain its inability to prevent it, despite engaging with the Jat leadership, but this explanation is unacceptable," the minority's panel said in its report.

The NCM team appreciated the "effective administrative intervention" at the Jan Sabha held by Muslims in Muzaffarnagar on August 30.

However, the report said, the Nangla Madaur mahapanchayat on September 7 "appears to have seen a supine police response".

The NCM "strongly" recommended speedy rehabilitation of the victims as prescribed in the Communal and Targeted Violence Bill. "The Bill is yet to become law, but can be used as a guideline."

The panel criticized role of MLAs at the mahapanchayat saying, "It is regrettable that MLAs addressed the gathering and did precious little to calm passions."

It recommended continued deployment of the CRPF, supported by its Rapid Action Force (RAF) in the coming months due to growing mistrust in the UP Police, especially the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC).

The report said, "Confidence in the police is obviously shaken, Muslims mistrust the PAC. Although we understand that the CRPF will be needed elsewhere shortly, with the elections round the corner, for the immediate purpose of facilitating return of migrants to their homes and extending a sense of security to all sections, it is recommended that the CRPF supported by its RAF be deployed in the district in the coming months."

Jats and Muslims were unhappy with the state government and the police. "Jats were very angry with the state government blaming it for being one sided, tying the hands of the police, and manoeuvring FIRs against the Jats. The Muslims complained of failure of the administration to protect them, and indeed of police hostility, migrants among them insisting they be resettled away from their villages," said the report.

It stressed on training of law enforcement agencies to check the misuse of information technology to stoke and fan riots as happened in Muzaffarnagar. Fake videos led to the "combustion of the night of September 7," NCM said.

Many had observed that riots in rural areas was a new phenomenon. The NCM though disagreed. "Much is made of the communal trouble spreading to the rural area for the first time. But the initial spark was lit in the villages and so, because of an apparent lack of preparedness at that level, naturally it became a rural riot," the report said.

The NCM urged fair probe and compensation for the victims. "It is imperative that investigation be thorough and no offender whatever his community or social standing be allowed to walk free. Only such accountability can help restore confidence so tragically eroded in the whole region," the report said.