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Haryana's response to dalit attacks irks panel

Subodh Ghildiyal, TNN, Aug 31, 2010, 03.27am IST

NEW DELHI: A parliamentary panel has questioned the rationale of single-member judicial inquiry commission set up by Haryana government to probe the attacks on dalits in Mirchpur, noting that a multi-member panel with a Scheduled Caste member would be better placed to give an unbiased report.

It marks a vote of no confidence in the state's follow-up action on Mirchpur riots which have painted Bhupinder Singh Hooda government in a corner.

The committee, which visited Mirchpur on July 2, expressed strong displeasure that many accused were still not arrested. It asked the state to nab them fast and initiate timebound action. Besides, it asked the state to provide security to witnesses.

While CM Hooda came under serious attack from within Congress and outside for his handling of Mirchpur case, the committee on the welfare of SCs/STs has attested the state's lackadaisical attitude in dealing with the case.

In its report tabled in Lok Sabha on Monday, the committee felt the attack, in which a man and his handicapped daughter were burnt to death, could have been avoided if preventive measures were taken following the tension between Balmiki and Jat communities in the village. There were raw nerves after an argument over a barking dog had led to a confrontation. A riotous mob set dalit households on fire on the third day.

The panel slammed the police for the "long delay" in arresting the culprits and for allowing the "dominant Jat community" to hold "Mahakhap panchayat" in Mirchpur despite simmering tension following the attacks.

The committee even called Mirchpur part of a pattern, noting that there were other incidents in Haryana that "shook the minds" of its members. The panel pointed out that the SHO in Mirchpur was the same officer under whose watch SCs were made to strip in 2005.

The committee's scepticism on the inquiry commission is seen as buttressing its suspicion that the administration was favouring the dominant Jats.

Arguing that inclusion of an SC member in the probe panel would bring out a report "free of bias, omissions and commissions", the committee noted, "A multi-member commission would have been in better position to do justice to the victims and throw better light on the whole issue."

While Mirchpur has attracted attention from across political spectrum -- visit by Rahul Gandhi and letters to CM from Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and Union home minister P Chidambaram and a protest letter to the President from UP CM Mayawati -- the committee headed by G C Naskar of Trinamool Congress summed up the attacks as Jat community's way of asserting dominance on the hapless Balmikis.

As a remedial measure, it asked the police to be "motivated to gain confidence of Balmikis" and to dispel the notion that it was biased towards the Jat community.

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Haryana told to arrest all Dalit attack accused by Monday

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By: IANS

New Delhi, Aug 26 (IANS) The Supreme Court Thursday slammed the Haryana government for its failure to arrest all those who looted and burnt Dalit houses in Mirchpur village in Hisar district April 21 and told it to arrest by Monday all accused who are on the run.

If those responsible for committing atrocities could not be arrested then what right does the director general of police have to continue in office, asked an apex court bench of Justice G.S. Singhvi and Justice A.K. Ganguly.

If Haryana police is incapable of arresting those wanted in the Mirchpur case, 'then we will ask some paramilitary force to arrest them', the court said.

The court also wanted to know what the chief secretary of the state was doing. The court said that all those wanted in Mirchpur attack on Dalits should be arrested by Monday.

The court said that all those who have committed the crime should be brought before the law and be made to account for their sins.

It may be recalled that April 21 this year people from the dominant caste attacked and burnt the houses of Valmiki community in Mirchpur in which 70-year-old Tara Chand and his disabled daughter Suman were burnt alive.

This led to an exodus of Dalits from the village.

Taking note of the failure of the government to rehabilitate the Dalit victims, Justice Singhvi told the Advocate General of Haryana H.S. Hooda: 'You do not allow them to live then should we direct the neighbouring state to accommodate them.'

The court also took note of the fact that things have come to such a pass that Dalit children of Mirchpur were not going to school.

Senior counsel Colin Gonsalves told the court that a 14-year-old Dalit girl died of shock after she was scolded and humiliated in the school.

Directing the government to provide two quintal wheat to each of the Dalit family in the village within seven days, the court asked the state to furnish all the records in support of its claim that it had given 65 people hundred days' employment under a central government scheme.

Justice Singhvi told Haryana's advocate general that 'apart from legal issues we are concerned with the humanitarian aspect of the plight of the victims'.

Justice Singhvi further said that 'all the people who are uprooted should be settled and protected. They should not live under threat'.

The court was told that 52 people involved in the Mirchpur incident have been arrested and remaining would be arrested soon.

This prompted Justice Singhvi to ask if the remaining accused have gone to Dubai or fled to other states in the country.

The court was also given a report by the advocates from the office of the advocate general on Mirchpur incident. The court said that the copies of the same should be given to all the parties in the case.

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