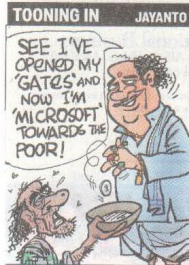


## nation



## short stories

## Couple tonsured, paraded; 3 arrested

**MEERUT:** A couple was beaten up and paraded with tonsured heads on Friday in Moradabad as they refused to follow the panchayat's diktat. Vijay and Babita fell in love. The panchayat objected as they belong to the same clan. Three people have been arrested in the case.

## Cabinet secy to look into Tadoba stir

**VAGPUR:** Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has asked Cabinet Secretary K.M. Chandrasekhar to look into the on-going agitation against proposed coal mining near Tadoba Tiger reserve in Chandrapur district. The coal ministry had allocated a coal block to Adani Power Limited near Lohara, adjacent of the reserve.

## Two security guards shot dead in Bengal

# Welfare of Dalits is mere lip service

SCHEDULED CASTE panel has submitted 2 reports in 7 years

Vikas Pathak  
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**NEW DELHI:** ■ 21 Dalit women are raped and 11 Dalits murdered in the country every week.

■ Just 30 per cent scheduled caste households have electricity; just 9 per cent get access to sanitation.

■ In many hostels built by the government for the community, children don't know how milk tastes as food supplies meant for students never reach them.

■ More than half of Dalit students drop out before class 8, the highest proportion in Bihar, Assam and West Bengal.

■ 40 per cent of the nation's Scheduled Caste citizens are agricultural labourers, have no land and work for others.

■ Untouchability — banned under the Constitution — is "rampant", 45 per cent of all cases coming from Andhra Pradesh alone.

The Congress and the Bahujan Samaj Party may be wrangling over their votes in Uttar Pradesh, but the miseries of a majority of the nation's 16 crore Dalits are still not heard.

A classified report of the Scheduled Caste Commission for 2004-05, in possession of HT, confirms this.

## STATE OF AFFAIRS

■ The Scheduled Caste Commission, mandated by the Constitution to highlight Dalits' suffering, hasn't bothered to file its annual report for four years.

■ The reports are a single-point source of information on the living conditions of Dalits and

become public only when they are tabled in Parliament.

■ In the past seven years, it has filed two reports. The last report was submitted in 2004-05.

■ The 2001-02 report hasn't been tabled in Parliament, violating Article 338(6) of Constitution.

To make matters worse, the Commission mandated by the Constitution to highlight the Dalits' suffering, hasn't bothered to file its annual report for four years. In the past seven years, it has filed reports only twice.

Before 2004-05, the last annual report was submitted by the Commission in 2001-02. This, too, is yet to be tabled in the Parliament.

The reports are a single-point source of information on the living conditions of Dalits in the country. These become public only after they are presented before Parliament.

Still, no report has been placed before the House since 2001, violating Article 338(6) of the Constitution that states: "The President shall cause all such reports to be laid before each House of Parliament along

with a memorandum explaining the action taken or proposed.."

Scheduled Castes Commission Chairman Buta Singh refused to comment on the issue without consulting relevant records.

"This shows the level of concern that governments have for Dalits. All talk of social inclusion is just that, talk," said sociologist Vivek Kumar, associate professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, who specialises in Dalit issues.

"Ensuring that Dalits get their rights is the responsibility of the state, including the SC Commission. State governments, too, have to forward a report to the Centre under SC/ST Rules 1995. All these agencies are shirking responsibility," said Shirivella Prasad,

general-secretary of National Dalit Movement for Justice.

Minister of State for Social Justice D. Napoleon told the Rajya Sabha on July 9: "The (2004-05) report of the Commission is yet to be laid in Parliament. Action taken reports from the ministries concerned on (it) have been obtained and are under compilation."

Social Justice Minister Mukul Wasnik could not be reached for comments despite several attempts made by HT.

The central bureaucracy, as was expected, has passed the buck to the states.

"The problem lies with state governments," said a senior official of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment requesting anonymity, as he is not authorised to speak to the media. "The commission's recommendations are sent to them for responses, and they delay the process."

The last report tabled before the Parliament, recommends the creation of a Scheduled Caste Human Development Index; spending part of expenditure on the welfare of scheduled castes depending on the proportion of their population in the state and sensitising the police on laws related to Dalits.