

# **An Exclusive Citizens Report**

## **MAU RIOTS: A REPORT**

### **Introduction:**

There is a lot of confusion in the media and at socio-political levels about the communal tension and widespread violence that began in Mau on October 13-14, 2005. Consequently, “Saajhi Duniya” considered it necessary to visit Mau and acquaint itself with the real situation. The first team from Saajhi Duniya visited Mau on October 20, when the city was under total curfew. Again on October 30 and 31, representatives of Saajhi Duniya went to Mau. This team comprised Prof. Roop Rekha Verma (social activist and secretary, Saajhi Duniya), Mr Vibhuti Narain Rai (president, Saajhi Duniya, litterateur and activist on issues related to communalism) and Mr Nasiruddin Haider Khan (journalist). Mr Jai Parkash Dhumketu (litterateur and activist) from Mau also joined the group. This team not only visited the riot-affected areas in Mau but also inquired into the causes of the violence. The team spoke to victims of the violence, social and political workers, the general public and officers of the district administration. The following report is the outcome of our efforts, over three days, to understand the recent riots in Mau.

Mau (also called Maunath Bhanjan) has always been a communally sensitive district. Previously a part of Azamgarh, Maunath Bhanjan witnessed periodic bouts of communal violence every few years. The population of Mau is 18,53,997 with an urban population of 3,60,369 and a rural population of 14,93,628. Within this population, around 80.5 per cent are Hindus, out of which 90 per cent of the population is rural and approximately 10 per cent is urban. In Mau district the Muslim population is less than 20 per cent of the total. Of the Muslim population in Mau, 40 per cent is rural and 60 per cent is urban.

### **Tana-Bana (Economic Structure) of Mau:**

Besides agriculture, Maunath Bhanjan has been famous for its silk saris; it has long been considered a big centre for sari manufacture. In the era of handloom most of the workers producing saris were Muslim, and among the Muslims it was mainly the Backward Castes who worked in sari manufacture. This trade has repeatedly suffered from riot-related violence in the past. Consequently, Muslims have suffered economic losses over and over again. With the entry of the power loom, the character of this trade altered slightly. Power looms required more money. Gradually, Hindus also entered the trade and a substantial number of them are said to work in this trade now. In addition, the number of big Hindu retailers has also greatly increased.

Currently, there are 75,000 power looms of which about 60,000 are located in the city where about 1.5-2 lakh saris are made every day. Several members of a family work on the same loom and, on an average, two saris are woven on a loom in a day.

Of late, the local sari trade has been going through an economic slump and is facing tough competition as saris from Surat have begun to overshadow the saris made in Mau. As compared to the latter, Surat saris are lighter, look more attractive and have a greater shine. Surat saris are a little cheaper too. As a result, saris from Surat have started replacing locally made saris in Mau's markets as well as in adjoining areas where Mau saris previously had a monopoly. Mau weavers are unable to meet the challenge from this competition. Weavers' wages have been drastically reduced. The payment for weaving a plain sari, which used to be Rs.80, has now been reduced to a mere Rs.40. Likewise, the payment for making a sari with "*Buta*" (all over design) has come down from Rs.100 or Rs.150 to Rs.80 or 85. These figures represent the collective earnings of three or four persons in a family who work on a loom and not that of a single person.

Moreover, while weavers in Surat are not dependent on others for material, Mau's weavers depend on outside traders for the material they use and the cost of

material is subject to traders' whims. Supply of electricity is another big problem for Mau weavers. Electricity is available for a maximum of eight hours in a day. Thus weavers must somehow labour within these eight hours to ensure production sufficient for their livelihood. The big traders have their own generators, which the smaller traders cannot afford. (Despite the other difficulties that weavers faced during the curfew, they were happy that they had electricity for a full day.) Another important change in this trade has been introduced more recently, over the past year or two. After power looms, now Chinese machines are also entering the trade. These Chinese machines, which cost approximately Rs.15 lakh each, are used for embroidery that was earlier done by hand. The introduction of this machine has, on the one hand, drastically reduced the number of employable workers and on the other, created a crisis of existence for small traders. Although today the number of these machines is very small, in the future this may escalate into a greater crisis. Currently, there are about 25 such machines in Mau.

#### **Previous History of Riots:**

Mau has a long history of communal violence. As per available information, Mau has been witness to communal riots in 1969, 1983, 1984, 1988, 1990 and 2000. An officer of the Mau district administration lost his life in the riots of 1984. Another point that must be highlighted in this context is that in the wake of the Babri Masjid demolition in 1992 it was the good sense of and timely intervention by CPI leaders that prevented any violent incidents in Mau.

#### **Background of the Recent Riots:**

Before one attempts to understand the background of the recent riots it is necessary to comprehend another local fact. In Mau, of all the activities held during Dussehra, the most important programme is the Bharat Milap. The annual Bharat Milap programme involves the performance of a 'ritual' that may sound ridiculous but is nonetheless important and because of which the programme has

always been a cause of worry for the police and the administration. The venue for the Bharat Milap is adjacent to the Shahi Katra Masjid (mosque) in an area that has a majority Muslim population. A controversy regarding the construction of a gate at the mosque is said to have raged several years ago, and the issue even made it to court. Later, people from both communities deliberated over the issue and decided that as the Bharat Milap chariot entered the locality where the programme was to be held, it would strike at the gate of the mosque three times. Similarly, the 'ritual' demands that on the occasion of Moharram Muslims will climb up and down three steps of the Sanskrit Pathshala that is situated in the neighbouring area. What this really amounts to is the appeasement of the egos of both communities!

Every year, organising the Bharat Milap poses a great challenge for the administration. Heavy security arrangements are always made on this occasion and the administration remains tense until the programme is over.

This year Bharat Milap coincided with the month of Ramzan, the day fixed for Bharat Milap was October 13. Customarily, the Bharat Milap *yatra* starts late in the evening and reaches the main venue early the next morning. During this time the *Birha* programme, singing of popular folk songs, continues at the venue. On the evening of October 13, *Birha* was being sung on loudspeakers at the abovementioned venue adjacent to Shahi Katra Masjid. This was also the time when the *Taravih* (prayers) were being recited in the mosque. Reciters of the *Taravih* objected to the use of loudspeakers because they were being disturbed by the loud sound. Following a request by an elderly man the loudspeakers stopped, but after a short while they started blaring again. At this, some Muslim youths pulled out the loudspeaker wires. The police caught these young men and locked them up at the police station. However, during the entire episode, the required, effective security arrangements were absent.

Following news of the young men's arrest, some people went to the police station and under pressure, the police let the arrested youth off. The Ram Lila Committee

did not appreciate the release of the Muslim youth. A little later some members of the Ram Lila Committee, BJP MLC Mr Ramji Singh, a few other leaders of the BJP and officers of the administration arrived at the Bharat Milap venue for talks. The Ram Lila Committee felt that in such an atmosphere spectator security at the Bharat Milap could not be guaranteed and it would not be possible to hold the function. After discussions with the administration, the Committee decided to postpone the Bharat Milap function to October 29. The whole controversy seemed to have ended at this point. But the conflict had not really been resolved. Some organisations, it seemed, were looking for an opportunity like this one. This opportunism was evident in the restarting of loudspeakers at the Bharat Milap venue on October 13. The rivalry between the BJP (established representative of Hindus) and the Hindu Yuva Vahini (an organisation led by Yogi Adityanath that is trying to usurp the BJP's position) was also responsible for fresh trouble. On the morning of the next day (October 14), workers of the Hindu Yuva Vahini and Hindu Mahasabha led by Ajit Singh Chandel, Puneet Singh Chandel, Sujit Kumar Singh, etc. blocked the road near Sanskrit Pathshala (which is near Shahi Katra Masjid and the venue of the Bharat Milap programme), protesting against the postponement of the Bharat Milap. Their choice of location for the blockade itself clearly indicates their plans for confrontation and conflict. This spot is considered highly communally sensitive. The Chandel residence is situated on the trisection where the road was blocked. Demonstrators accused the Ram Lila Committee and BJP leaders of cowardice and neglecting Hindu interests. The crowd shouted extremely provocative slogans, thus igniting the atmosphere. The police failed to intervene effectively at this juncture. After this, as is often seen, rioting began. There was slogan shouting, stone pelting and firing – the firing was started by the Chandel brothers, who are leaders of the Hindu Yuva Vahini, and several people were injured. The violence in Mau began, in fact, with this incident.

**Regime of Violence:**

The bleeding Muslim boys who were injured in the firing by the Chandel brothers were carried to hospital in an open rickshaw trolley and they passed through areas that were mostly Muslim inhabited. This public display of the injured boys added fuel to fire. Ordinary people believed mass bloodshed was underway as they took these boys for dead. After this, agitated Muslims took to the streets. Shops owned by Hindus in Sadar Chowk and Rauza area were targeted. Some persons were also killed. About a dozen shops in Sadar Chowk, Rauza and Kaudi building were looted. The looted shops included the typing shop of Jagdish Rai, the clinic of a dentist, Dr Vijay Odhekar, the sari shop of Ram Gopal, Gupta Radios, Raman Electrical Works, the sari shop of IC Kedia, the cloth shop of Dina Nath Agarwal, Jaiswal Vastralya, Sindhi Bidi, the hardware shop of Triloki, four shops on Chandpura road (of which three belong to Muslims), the office of Jamia Ahl-e-Hadith, the *jadi-booti* shop of Vikram, a few shops adjacent to Munshipura overbridge, etc.

The shops looted in these areas belong largely to Hindus. Some of these shops are very big and old. It is estimated that they suffered losses of several lakh rupees. Of these shops, three were totally burnt and damaged. It is, however, important to note that dozens of Hindu shops near these looted/burnt shops remained totally untouched – the damage seems to be very selective. Rumours of looting and desertion in Sindhi Colony spread wildly for a few days but turned out to be false and baseless. During relaxation of curfew all shops in this area were found to be open and full of goods.

According to locals, a few of the shops that were looted/damaged were under tenancy dispute and some vested interests may have taken advantage of the prevailing chaos to settle matters in this way. In one of the abovementioned areas, a soap godown in Goenka Bhawan behind Chandel's residence was also looted. During this period, the police did not act appropriately to quell the violence. They remained largely inactive and ineffective. False rumours of the massacre of Hindus spread. It was also widely rumoured that their property had been

completely destroyed and their daughters had been kidnapped. These rumours were baseless but sufficient to ignite a violent reaction. After this, in the Hindu dominated new areas in the eastern parts of the city and in some other areas violence, loot, arson and destruction started and continued in different phases for several days. In these areas, very selectively, shops, houses and factories owned by Muslims were targeted. Off Sadar Chowk, in the Hindu dominated Bal Niketan area, a Muslim-owned kiosk was burnt while three shops of Ahmad Beej Bhandar were looted and in Ali building in Sahadatpura area several shops owned by Muslims such as Sansar Electronics, Jeans Corner, Jeans Collection and Sana Dupatta Centre were looted or burnt. This is a very big market and a large number of Hindu-owned shops adjacent to the looted shops remained completely untouched. Moreover, during the relaxation of curfew as one looked at the large number of open shops, it was only if one scrutinised the area closely that one could see, amidst the open shops, a few isolated shops that were totally ruined. Only a very few Muslim shops remained intact in this area. Our information is that the owners paid a huge sum to local goons to keep their shops safe.

On the Ghazipur trisection two pure vegetarian restaurants, namely, Grihasth Plaza and Paris Plaza, suffered damage and loot. The glass on the restaurants' exterior was totally damaged and Grihasth Plaza was also looted although the rioters did not manage to loot or damage the properties too severely. The owners of both these restaurants are Muslims. Past Ghazipur trisection, on the bypass road, Habib hospital of Dr Asghar Ali was damaged and his new Scorpio jeep and a motorcycle were charred in arson. Dr Asghar Ali somehow managed to save himself and fled. Further up on this road, in Brahmsthan, a big complex including Ahmad Beej Bhandar was extensively looted and then set aflame. During our visit on the 20th, several days after the attack, we saw smoke still billowing from this complex.

On the Salahabad turn, a big factory named Shimla Saree of the famous Haji Mukhtar suffered extensive looting and arson. Three big computerised Chinese

machines, about 20,000 saris, computer, generator, fridge, furniture, all were burnt or looted and the estimated loss is about Rs.1 crore. It is only after actually visiting this factory that one can fully comprehend the immense losses incurred. It is indeed a matter of great surprise that such a big factory and its costly gadgets had no insurance cover.

After this incident, a big crowd of Muslims reached the area and indulged in looting and arson in about a dozen Hindu-owned shops in the vicinity. The arsonists burnt tractors, vans, motorcycles, etc. These shops, by and large, had small investments of capital. Two or three shops among these were also damaged. According to some persons whom we spoke to, during this bout of violence some Hindus called Mukhtar Ansari to help save them. But even though Mukhtar Ansari did arrive, the violence did not stop – in fact, while Mukhtar Ansari was present there, firing took place and one person died. An FIR was lodged against Mukhtar Ansari in this case although later the complainant disowned his allegation. Now even police officers say that Mukhtar Ansari did not carry out the firing.

Further ahead, beyond Shimla Saree factory, the Modern School run by Mr Shahid and Mau Modern School run by Mr Hamid were damaged. Shahid and Hamid are brothers. Previously this used to be one school run by both brothers together but later they set up two separate schools. These schools are located on the Salahabad turn, in the heart of a Hindu majority area. Their buses were damaged and a lot of other goods were burnt down.

On October 14 rioters attacked a mosque near Mau Railway Station. After attacking this mosque the rioters headed towards another mosque adjacent to the railway line. To save this mosque, Muslims from the adjoining area came to chase the rioters away. These Muslims came to the railway station and although the rioters ran away on their arrival, the Muslims attacked the railway employees and passengers there. One person who was injured in this violence died later during treatment. To quell this attack the GRP fired on the rioters as a result of which one Muslim boy died.

The most horrifying face of these riots is Alinagar and Chhutki Rahjania. Situated about two km from the Salahabad turn, these areas were targets of violence in several phases. The whole area is a new colony of Muslim weavers. Almost every house runs a power loom. The houses are all made of brick but apart from one house, the walls are all bare of plaster – these weavers possess small amounts of capital. These Muslim weavers' homes are said to have been attacked after the events at the Salahabad turn, as part of a chain reaction. The first attack took place on October 14 when slogan shouting and stone throwing took place but as the Muslims who had come to offer *namaaz* (prayers) in the neighbourhood mosque retaliated and raised an alarm, the rioters ran away. The next day, that is, on October 15, Hindus from the neighbouring colony started fleeing the area. Frightened and uncertain, some Muslims also started fleeing. By noon a concentrated attack had begun on Alinagar and Chhutki Rahjania. Leaving all their belongings behind, everyone started running towards the main city on the other side of the railway line. Some people who were running for their lives were stopped by the police and arrested. Following a survey of this area it is estimated that in about 150 houses arson and loot continued for a long time. Power looms have either been broken or burnt down. Any property that the houses contained was looted. There are several like Nazma who had put aside jewellery and other items for her daughter's marriage to be held after Id and all these were looted and/or damaged in the violence. Two mosques were damaged in this area. The mosques were subjected to arson after loot. We could see torn and half-burnt fragments of the Koran too, in the mosques and scattered in the fields outside. Residents have started returning to Alinagar but the number of such persons is still very small. When we visited Alinagar on October 30, only a very few members of a small number of families had returned. In Chhutki Rahjania only the structure of about two dozen houses is left standing. Even the windows and doors, along with the frames, were taken by the vandals. From some houses entire power looms have been uprooted and taken away, and hand pumps and toilets have been broken.

When we asked people working in the adjoining fields and boys playing cricket in the fields nearby who the owners of these houses were, they were not ready to speak and feigned ignorance. Even 15 days after the violence the owners had not dared to return.

Apart from these areas, on the Gorakhpur-Varanasi road, Narja Filling Station owned by Burhanuddin Khan was looted and burnt. Nothing in this petrol pump was found intact. Likewise, in the Hindu dominated area in Pardahan, Rana Khatoon's Rajeev Gandhi Mahavidyalaya suffered extensive damage. Nothing is left in this school; the gate, the doors, the windows and even the iron grills have been taken away from the school building. What the looters could not take away they have damaged and reduced to ashes. The adjacent house belonging to Simran Khan also presented a similar picture. It is obvious that all this could not have been done over a mere hour or two. It was clearly done in a leisurely way and seems to be the handiwork of those who perhaps had full confidence that the administration would not interfere. It is especially surprising that violence of this intensity was perpetrated for several hours in an area that is only a few steps away from the residence of the district judge. A member of the police personnel told us that Rana Khatoon is a great believer in *sarva dharma sambhav* (all religions as one) and used to financially support the local Krishna Janmashtami function. About 15 or 16 factories were looted in Tajpur New Industrial Estate. Each of these factories contained about four or five power looms. The rioters took away some of these power looms while the rest were consigned to flames. All but one of these belonged to Muslims. In Salempur, near Rampur Chakia, approximately one-and-a-half dozen Muslim houses suffered loot and arson. The looms installed in these houses were also damaged.

The garden of CPI leader Imtiyaz Ahmad, located on the other side of the river, also suffered substantial losses. Four junk shops on the bypass, a doctor's clinic, Kanpur Machinery Stores (engine, motor, thrasher etc.), Airlight Machinery near old government hospital, a dyeing factory in Ranveerpura, about a dozen

wholesale shops in the vegetable market at Bhati and Azamgarh trisection, the school of the municipal chairman in Matlupur, many shops in Ratanpura Market, Kasimpur, Devparva, Munshi Purva, Adari Indara, Chiriaya Kot, Ranipur, etc. were targets of loot and arson. All these shops and factories belong to Muslims. One such shop belongs to a Muslim who used to supply tents and all the other material used for the Durga Puja every year. Some boys from Faidullapur badly beat up the Muslim *pradhan* of Kurthi Jafarpur and he had to be admitted to hospital. In both villages, the respective minorities have fled.

As per the information we have gathered so far, eight mosques were attacked during these riots. The mosques were looted, damaged and burnt. During our visit, in one or two places some distinctive slogans were also seen, e.g. '*Jai Shri Ram*', '*Jai Mata Di*', '*Musalmano kaatna Hinduon se sikho*'. These slogans point to a certain trend, one that it is essential we identify and comprehend.

On October 18, days after the riots began the police filed FIRs against about 250 persons including Mukhtar Ansari, BJP MLC Ramji Singh, Hindu Yuva Vahini leaders Ajit Singh Chandel and Sujit Kumar Singh, BSP ex-MLA Nasim Ahmad, on charges of inciting riots, murder, arson and destruction.

BJP leaders tried their best to cash in on this opportunity to recover lost ground. The kind of statements these leaders issued at the very beginning of the riots is sufficient proof of this. Kalyan Singh (national vice-president, BJP), Keshrinath Tripathi (state president) and Lalji Tandon (leader of the opposition, UP legislature) took up the charge in Lucknow. They blamed the riots on the government's appeasement policy. They publicly spread rumours that members of a particular community were fleeing from place to place to save their lives. They held Mukhtar Ansari solely responsible for the riots. Suddenly these BJP leaders became very active. On his arrest as he was trying to enter Mau, Keshrinath Tripathi even said that the SP government was bent on making Muslims the majority community and, he alleged, this was the reason why Hindus were being selectively massacred. Yogi Adityanath said similar things when he was prevented

from going to Mau. Such falsehoods were repeatedly uttered in public and an atmosphere of such credibility was built up around them, enough to convince people that a mass annihilation of Hindus was in progress.

After a big hue and cry, on October 25 Mukhtar Ansari surrendered in Ghazipur, in connection with some other case, while the police only managed to arrest Ramji Singh much later, on November 2, 2005. Before this, Mukhtar Ansari and Ramji Singh roamed free and the police did not arrest them despite the fact that both men had FIRs filed against them. Ramji Singh had openly dared the state to arrest him and face the consequences. After his arrest, too, the BJP has been talking tough again, daring the state to face the consequences.

### **Victims of the Riots:**

According to official information, eight persons died in the Mau riots over three days (October 14, 15 and 16). Two persons died on October 14, two on October 15 and four on October 16. Apart from these, a boy who also died in the violence has not been listed because frightened family members buried him without getting a post-mortem done. Among the dead were five Hindus and four Muslims. As per official information, 37 persons were injured between October 14 and October 29. As per public information, there are many other injured persons who were not taken to hospital and thus are not included in the list. As of October 30, the number of those who have been arrested on charges of violence or only on suspicion is 442. Of these, 205 are Hindus and 237 are Muslims. A large number of people complained of police excesses. In the weavers' colony, Muslim women and men complained that the police-PAC arrested people after breaking open the door late at night. Among the arrested, they alleged, were minors.

### **Losses:**

According to one estimate, more than 300 houses have suffered arson, loot and damage and about 300 small and big business establishments, shops and kiosks

have been looted or consigned to flames. The biggest loser is the Muslim weaver. As per the information gathered to date, approximately 150-200 power looms have been destroyed in the riots. These power looms were owned mainly by Muslims. The temerity shown by the rioters is astounding. Many looms were dug up and taken away by the looters, an operation that must have taken hours. These weavers are now facing starvation.

The worst hit people are those who are daily wagers or have small earnings. The atrocious condition Mau was in during the recent riots can be gauged from the fact that even 14 days after the outbreak of violence it could not be linked via rail services. Even a fortnight after the riots began the situation did not permit a simultaneous relaxation of curfew for a couple of hours in different parts of the city. Common people were faced with a bread-and-butter crisis at festival time. The happiness of Diwali and Id had evaporated from people's lives. The total losses suffered in Mau must run into crores.

**Role of Mukhtar Ansari:**

Mukhtar Ansari is an independent MLA from Mau Sadar. Mukhtar's base is Ghazipur. Anyone actively interested in eastern UP will be familiar with the activities of Mukhtar Ansari. The general perception of the common man is that Mukhtar Ansari is a brutal murderer and extortionist. This is not far from the truth for his past deeds have indeed been such as should warrant the strictest punishment from the law enforcement system. He is accused in several cases of murder, kidnapping and ransom. He has also been to jail several times. One of Mukhtar Ansari's characteristics is that he has almost always been allied with the ruling party in UP. Currently he is a Samajwadi Party (SP) supporter. During the last, BSP, regime he supported the BSP government. In the last assembly elections, where the Samajwadi Party had allied with the CPI, the Mau Sadar seat was allotted to the CPI. Despite this agreement, SP workers worked for Mukhtar

Ansari instead of the CPI candidate. Mukhtar Ansari also campaigned for several SP candidates in neighbouring areas.

The media's constant focus on Mukhtar Ansari created the impression that the assaults on Hindus were carried out at Mukhtar Ansari's behest. Not only this, the media projected Mukhtar Ansari as the main cause of the violence. To establish this, the electronic media, especially *Aaj Tak*, repeatedly telecast a news clip in which Mukhtar Ansari was shown moving around in an open jeep with armed security personnel, behind the crowd. The interesting thing is that in the entire news clip Mukhtar Ansari's voice was missing; the news clip was mute.

According to our information, this CD was made by some stringers for the electronic media channels who rode on Mukhtar Ansari's jeep during his visit to the riot prone areas. Obviously Mukhtar Ansari had offered them a place in the jeep. Later, when the actual CD was shown, it revealed Mukhtar Ansari in an entirely different role. The CD contained Mukhtar Ansari's voice too. He was exhorting people to go back, giving instructions to send the injured to hospital and talking to police officers. The boys injured in the firing by Chandel were lying at the police station and Mukhtar Ansari sent them to hospital in his jeep.

We also received information that when the violence started in the city, Mukhtar Ansari was not present there. He was seen on the streets several hours later.

According to most of the people, from both communities, whom we spoke to, Mukhtar Ansari was trying to pacify the crowds and he also arranged to send the injured to hospital. These people even said that on the Salahabad turn it was Hindus who called Mukhtar Ansari to save them although he had to face stone pelting and ultimately he had to run away.

All this notwithstanding, the commonly held opinion is that the mere presence of Mukhtar Ansari on the streets would have been enough to encourage the lumpen elements in the Muslim community. The question is: how could Mukhtar Ansari move around openly in the city despite curfew? Mukhtar Ansari's argument is that he is a legislator and as a people's representative he came out onto the streets to

quell the violence. However, Mukhtar Ansari has another image, apart from that of a people's representative, and this image can have adverse effects on such occasions as the recent riots in Mau.

**Role of the Police and Administration:**

It is a commonly held belief that the Mau district administration dances to Mukhtar Ansari's tune, that officers of his choice have been appointed in Mau. Though such an administration may be good for other things, these officers were not equipped to tackle communal riots in a professional manner. That is why the riots continued. Mau remained besieged by unrestrained violence for more than 72 hours. A total lack of will on the part of the state was clearly visible here.

According to the information given to us, on October 13 two companies of the PAC were available in Mau. This was the period when district panchayat elections were being held and therefore it is quite believable that a large section of the available security forces may have been posted in distant areas. On October 14, after the riots started, three companies of the PAC, two companies of the RAF and four DSPs had reached Mau. After the riots, elections in Mau were also postponed and thus the forces posted for the elections also became available for controlling the riots. On October 15, three additional companies of the PAC, 12 DSPs and 20 inspectors were sent to Mau. On October 16, two more companies of the PAC were made available to the Mau administration. It is thus clear that even if on October 14 the Mau administration had an insufficient police force, on October 15 and 16 the available police force was sufficient, in the real sense of the term, to control a small place like Mau.

On October 14, both Hindus and Muslims suffered in terms of life and property. But the violence on October 15 and 16 mainly affected the life and property of Muslims. It is not that the administration did not have a sufficient police force; in fact it is a patent example of lack of will on the part of the state. It seems that the organs of the state did not wish to stop the violence. It was only as a fallout of this

attitude on the part of the administration that Alinagar, Chhutki Rahjania, Shimla Saree, Chakia, Ali building, the Khadi Store in Ranveerpura, Narza Filing Centre, Ahmad Beej Bhandar, Tajpur New Industrial Estate, areas near Nadi Us Paar, were targeted for violence after October 14.

**Hindu Yuva Vahini and Yogi Adityanath in Purvanchal:**

What is happening in Purvanchal is occasionally discussed but there is no serious initiative to analyse the same. The heir of Goraksha Peeth and BJP MP Yogi Adityanath's aggressive mobilisation of Hindus over the past decade was clearly reflected in the Mau riots of 2005. During the past decade, Yogi Adityanath has made this entire area, especially the area known as Gorakhpur under British rule, his laboratory. When he first emerged on the political scene, supporters of Yogi Adityanath shouted, 'To live in Gorakhpur one has to chant, Yogi, Yogi! (*Gorakhpur mein rahna hai toh yogi yogi kahna hoga*)'. As his area of influence expands, this slogan is also taking new forms. Now the slogan is, 'To live in Purvanchal one has to chant, Yogi, Yogi! (*Purvanchal mein rahna hai toh yogi yogi kahna hai*)'.

So far Yogi Adityanath's influence has been strongest in the seven districts of Gorakhpur division (Gorakhpur, Deoria, Kushinagar, Mahrajganj) and Basti division (Basti, Sant Kabir Nagar, Siddharthanagar). He is now spreading his wings in Azamgarh division, of which Mau is a part.

Yogi Adityanath functions through different organisations, which he calls cultural organisations. Included among these are Hindu Yuva Vahini, Hindu Jagran Manch, Sri Ram Shakti Prakoshtha, Gorakhnath, Purvanchal Vikas Manch, Vishwa Hindu Mahasabha and Hindu Mahasabha. The main functionary of all these organisations is Yogi Adityanath himself. A candidate from Yogi Adityanath's Hindu Mahasabha has even won the assembly elections on a ticket from Gorakhpur Sadar and made it to the UP assembly as an MLA. But for Yogi Adityanath the most vital organisation is the Hindu Yuva Vahini. This

organisation comprises mostly unemployed youth, petty criminals and youth striving for an identity. For them, any small incident involving Muslims takes on vital importance. As soon as they receive news of such an event, Hindu Yuva Vahini workers arrive there as messengers of Yogi Adityanath and then later, Yogi Adityanath himself arrives. Most of their acts are destructive, such as arson, destruction of property and beating. A vivid example is the Mohanmundera episode in Kushinagar. Here, a Muslim boy raped a Hindu girl and the girl died during treatment. Three days later, after Yogi Adityanath heard of this, he arrived there with his Vahini workers. The property of all 72 Muslim families was looted, their houses were set ablaze and the Masjid damaged. The police remained a neutral witness. There are several such examples of the Vahini's activities. If for any reason 'revenge' cannot be taken then they hold a meeting at the same spot that the event took place. They call such meetings 'Hindu Sangam' or 'Hindu Chetna Sangam'. After the riots started, when Yogi Adityanath's attempts to go to Mau with his workers did not succeed he held a meeting at Dohri Ghat itself, where he was stopped. This polarised Hindus there and also affected the district panchayat elections. Not only this, it also emboldened the Yogi Adityanath supporter in Mau and misinformation about the mass massacre of Hindus was communicated to places outside the district.

When Yogi Adityanath visited Lucknow for a programme recently, he not only repeated the falsehood that Hindus were being massacred in Mau but also warned of revenge. Some analysts contend that the spread of Yogi Adityanath's work is really the result of administrative inaction. Not only this, Yogi Adityanath is also taking advantage of the fact that the other political parties have abandoned the struggle for development.

### **Role of the Media:**

During the recent riots in Mau the role of the media consistently revealed several instances of bias. The manner in which TV channels showed news clips of

Mukhtar Ansari, even going so far as to suppress his voice in the telecasts, indicates that they wanted to give their viewers the message that Mukhtar Ansari was at the centre of the riots and he alone was responsible for the loss of Hindu life and property. Whatever the other allegations that may rightfully be made against Mukhtar Ansari, the truth is that had the media made public both the audio and the visual aspects of the CD that was telecast, his image would have been quite different today. In the print media too, Mukhtar Ansari was presented as the main culprit. Although on the first day one newspaper clearly published that ‘Stones were pelted on the Sadar MLA Mukhtar Ansari who reached the site of the riot to pacify the people’, soon all the newspapers, including the abovementioned one, presented him as the central cause of violence.

Not only this, be it Hindi newspapers or English, all of them published news giving the impression that Hindus alone suffered any losses. Newspapers did not give any clear information about how the riots started and who started them. Moreover, for days together they did not mention the names of organisations such as the Hindu Yuva Vahini, Hindu Mahasabha or BJP, or their leaders. Any names other than that of Mukhtar Ansari appeared in newspapers only five days after the riots began, when FIRs were filed against them. *The Times of India* went so far as to carry a front-page headline on October 18, ‘Feeling of insecurity grips Hindus in Mau’, giving the impression that Hindus were being exclusively targeted in the riots and they were all living in the shadow of fear. *The Indian Express* also published such news. In the Gorakhpur edition of the newspaper *Dainik Jagran*, the situation in Mau was equated with that in Kashmir. In one news item it said that ‘The days are not far when Mau city would become synonymous with Kashmir’. Another news item in this newspaper declared that ‘the condition of Mau was much more dangerous than even the civil war in Kashmir’. News items in the papers, *Amar Ujala*, *Hindustan*, *Hindustan Times*, etc. also painted biased pictures of Mau.

### **Lack of Intervention by Political Forces:**

There was a time when Mau was a strong leftist centre. Mau, Ghazipur, Azamgarh and Ballia were places where leftists not only had strongholds but from where candidates of the Communist Party of India were elected as MLAs and MPs. Today the situation is such that while a CPI candidate loses his deposit, a person like Mukhtar Ansari gets elected. During the tense period after the demolition of the Babri Masjid, the intervention by Communist leader (CPI) Imtiyaz Ahmad played a significant role in preventing violence. Even today people remember his role and say that had Imtiyaz Ahmad been in the city during these riots, at least in Rauza and Chowk Hindu shops would not have been looted. The major point being that when a party with a people-oriented ideology and strong roots in the people's struggle loses its base, the forces that occupy its position inevitably flourish on riots and violence. Moreover, the silence and inaction on the part of civil society is also a cause for grave concern.

### **Example of Humanity:**

“Had Muslims not saved them, how have Hindus in the old city survived?” This comment from a political worker is very important. In Mau there are several persons who saved the lives of people and challenged the rioters. There are quite a few persons in this city like Haji Abdul Sattar, Abdul Samad and Haji Wakil who challenged the rioters in Sindhi Colony, or like Salim Ansari, Qamruzzaman and Haji Irfan who stopped the fanatics. On the other hand, there are people like Ashok Singh, who saved the Grihasth Plaza at Ghazipur trisection from arson, Anil Rai, who defended a furniture shop against looters, Hindu landlords near Ali building who saved Noorkamal, Dr Udai Narain Singh, who saved two lives, Ashok Gupta, who gave shelter to nine Muslims. In Indara, a Muslim sheltered several Hindus when a mob was approaching them and had his fingers tangled in the door while closing it and chopped off in a knife attack. The Hindus under his shelter remained safe and intact. Parmhans Singh and Imtiyaz Dot Com helped

restore peace in Hindu and Muslim areas by making rounds along with the residents of Keyari Tola and Dakshin Tola. Iqbal and his wife in Keyari Tola saved Harijan Basti. They stood like rocks in front of a violent mob. Likewise, a Muslim woman of Kasai Tola near Paithan Tola challenged the rioters. In Chandpura, a Muslim defended a Hindu milk-trader and in Hussainpura, Muslims saved a *Khatal*. In Chandpura grain market, when rioters attempted arson, Comrade Wasiullah Hasan stood in their way, saying that the shops could be damaged only after taking his life. On the Salahabad turn, Singhasan Yadav helped a Muslim escape from the rioters. Some Muslims guarded the Kaali Temple in Malik Tahirpura and shops of Hindus in Ibrahim Market.

**Inferences from the Riots:**

1. The riots in Mau occurred entirely as a result of the failure of the administration and the state.
2. These riots have been bigger and more menacing than other riots that have taken place here in the past. This was the first time that rioters organised themselves and carried out the violence in a systematic manner on such a large scale. The losses suffered this time have also been the greatest.
3. According to residents of Mau, it was also for the first time during a riot that schools and hospitals belonging to the minority community were vandalised and large-scale attacks on mosques were made. This is a cause of great concern.
4. The power loom is a lifeline for weavers. The destruction of the power looms is tied in with their economic ruin. Mau's weavers require immediate help in view of the destruction of the local power looms.
5. What was limited to discourses alone is now a naked truth before us. Eastern UP is sitting on the mouth of a communal volcano. Anything can happen here at any time. The recent riots in Mau and the violence in neighbouring areas clearly demonstrate this. Immediately after the riots in

- Mau swift attempts were also made to incite communal violence in Ballia, Ghazipur, Azamgarh, Deoria, Meerut and Agra.
6. The intervention of secular forces is absolutely essential to stop this surge of communalism. The state will also have to show its will power. Else, several other Maus may easily occur.
  7. Even in the midst of intense violence, a large number of individuals came forward and not only saved the lives of people from the other community but also risked their own lives in frustrating the attempts of rioters. Their actions are especially encouraging for those who cherish an enduring faith in humanity. Their initiative proves that a little bit of courage can go a long way in meeting even so big a challenge as riots and rampant violence.

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