

## **Nanavati Commission - 2002 Godhra Riots**

### **Why in news?**

- The Gujarat government tabled in the Assembly the report of the Nanavati Commission.
- The commission had been appointed to probe the burning of the Sabarmati Express in 2002 and the subsequent riots in the state.

### **What is the Nanavati Commission?**

- It was set up in 2002 following the burning of the Sabarmati Express near Godhra station on February 27, 2002, in which 59 died.
- The Commission inquired into events leading to the Sabarmati Express incident.
- It also looked into -
  - i. the subsequent incidents of violence in Gujarat in which nearly 1,200 persons had been killed (including the 59 in the train carnage)
  - ii. the inadequacy of administrative measures taken to prevent and deal with disturbances
  - iii. whether the incident in Godhra was pre-planned
  - iv. whether information was available with agencies to prevent it
- The commission was also tasked to recommend measures to prevent such incidents in the future.
- In 2004, its scope was expanded to include inquiry into the role and conduct of the then CM Narendra Modi and/or any other minister(s), police officers, other individuals and organisations.
- The Commission got 24 extensions until it submitted the final report in 2014.

### **Why was the delay in tabling it?**

- The first report, containing a single volume dealing with the inquiry into the burning of the coaches, was tabled in the Assembly in 2008.
- It gave a clean chit to Modi, his council of ministers and police officers.
- It concluded that the train burning was “pre-planned act” and done to “cause harm to the kar sevaks travelling in that coach”.
- The final report was submitted in 2014 to then Chief Minister Anandiben Patel, months after Modi became Prime Minister.
- The final report was of 9 volumes across 2,500 pages.

- Minister of State for Home said that it was voluminous and they needed to study every aspect before putting it out in public, and so was the delay

### **What are the key findings?**

- The Commission found that there was no conspiracy involved in the riots.
- The riots were largely the outcome of the anger over the Godhra train burning incident.
- It gave a clean chit to Modi, as well as to police, the BJP, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal.
- **Findings about Modi** - The commission quoted Modi as having told it that he was being kept informed about the incident.
- The senior officers of respective departments were keeping him posted with the steps taken to control the sudden violent situation.
- The measures were on with the assistance of all forces including para military forces and military, which the state agencies had deployed immediately.
- **Ministers, police and other organisations** - There was no incident to show that either BJP, VHP or any other political party or any religious organisations had instigated attacks on Muslims.
- Only in two cases it was alleged that VHP persons had taken part in those incidents.
- The incidents against Muslims appear to have happened because of the anger of the people on account of the Godhra incident.
- Anti-social elements appear to have taken part in some incidents.
- The police had taken prompt and effective steps to curb violence and had saved lives and properties.
- There was no evidence to show there was any inaction or negligence on the part of police in maintaining law and order in the district.
- There was also no evidence to show involvement of any Minister of the State in the incidents or any interference in the functioning of the police.

### **What are the key recommendations?**

- Reasonable restriction be placed upon the media in matter of publication of reports about the incidents (during communal riots).
- The Commission cited testimonies accusing media.
- The media gave wide publicity to the Godhra incident and the incidents that happened thereafter people got excited and indulged in communal violence.
- It also found “deep rooted hatred between some sections of Hindu and Muslim communities” as one of the causes of communal riots.
- It recommends the government to take steps for removing this “weakness” from society.

- In this regard, it cited instances to show that Hindus, in fact, were either assaulted for helping Muslims or alerted Muslims about possible attacks.

**Source: Indian Express**

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