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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