

STAVAN DESAI

Stavan Desai's tryst with Journalism began in 2001 when he joined The Indian Express in Ahmedabad as a Staff Reporter. He then moved to Mumbai as a Special Correspondent to head a six-member crime and legal team focusing on special stories and reports. Stavan is currently a Special Correspondent for Hindustan Times in Mumbai. He focuses on covering terrorism, insurgency and Left-wing extremism. He also assists the Legal Editor in handling a team of nine reporters who cover Crime and Legal beats across Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Thane. Stavan did his Masters in Communication Studies at MS University, Vadodara.

Stavan won The PoleStar Award for 'Best Breaking News' in 2004 for his article, 'Three Years Later, When Cellphones Ring: Who Spoke To Whom When Gujarat Was Burning', that appeared in The Indian Express.

THREE YEARS LATER, WHEN CELL PHONES RING

Who spoke to whom, when Gujarat was burning

Two CDs with more than 5 lakh entries have been lying with the Gujarat police and are now with the Nanavati-Shah riots panel. These have records of all cellphone calls made in Ahmedabad over the first five days of the riots which saw the worst massacres.

Two compact discs could change that. For, they contain records of all cellphone calls made in Ahmedabad from February 25, 2002, two days before the horrific Sabarmati Express attack to March 4, five days that saw the worst communal violence in recent history.

This staggering amount of data - there are more than 5 lakh entries - was investigated over several weeks by this newspaper. They show that Patel was in touch with the key riot accused, top police officers, including the Police Commissioner, top government officials, and even the Chief Minister's Office while Naroda burned. The CDs, obtained by the Crime Branch of the Gujarat police way back in April, are now sitting with the Nanavati-Shah Commission. They have been obtained by the Sunday Express and are a treasure trove of information that investigators could build on in their search for justice for the riot victims. These are not transcripts of conversations. These show:

** How the riot accused were in regular touch with politicians, police officers and government officials. All at a time when the city and the state was burning, when the Narendra Modi government looked the other way and the Opposition Congress went to sleep.

** Using cellphone tower locations, the data also gives information on the physical location of the caller and the person at the other end.

PART ONE

Tracking VHP's gen secy on day 1,2 (published 21 November 2004)

Vishwa Hindu Parishad's General Secretary in Gujarat is a pathologist called Jaideep Patel. He was booked for rioting and arson in the Naroda Patiya massacre, the worst post-Godhra riot incident in which 83 were killed, many of them burnt alive. The police closed the case saying there was not enough evidence. Records show that Patel, who lives in Naroda, was there when the massacre began, then left for Bapunagar which also witnessed killings and returned to Naroda. And that he was in touch with other riot accused, Babu Bajrangi, Ashok Govind Patel, Bipin Patel and local BJP MLA Maya Kodnani. February 27, 2002 Sabarmati Express attacked at 8.05 am, bandh called by VHP in the evening, BJP backs the bandh. Patel is in touch with senior police officials, his VHP colleagues in Delhi, state Home Minister, BJP chief.

** **11.09 am:** Patel leaves the city for Godhra.

** **12.48 pm:** Patel is in Godhra and one of the first persons he speaks to is then Ahmedabad DCP (Zone V) R J Savani who calls him at 1.05 pm.

** **2.29 pm:** Patel receives a call from a Delhi number and speaks for 215 seconds. This number is registered in the name of Bharatiya Sanskriti Pratishthan, Sector-6, R K Puram, New Delhi, the VHP headquarters.

**** 3.30 pm:** Patel calls state BJP President Rajendrasinh Rana and speaks for 267 seconds. At 4 pm the VHP called for a Gujarat Bandh the next day, on February 28, 2002, and the BJP quickly declares its support.

**** 5.00 pm:** Patel receives a call from Bharatiya Sanskriti Prathisthan, Delhi and speaks for 357 seconds.

**** 5.07 pm:** Patel again receives a call from this Delhi institution.

**** 5.14 pm:** DCP Savani calls Patel and speaks for 117 seconds.

**** 5.17 pm:** DCP Savani again calls Patel.

**** 8.03 pm:** Then state MoS (Home) Gordhan Zadafia calls Patel and speaks for 159 seconds.

**** 8.39 pm:** Patel calls Zadafia.

**** 9.13 pm:** Patel calls Zadafia again, this time for just 3 seconds.

**** 9.16 pm:** DCP Savani calls Patel and speaks for 138 seconds.

**** 9.20 pm:** Patel again calls Zadafia and speaks for 186 seconds.

**** After 11.58 pm:** Patel leaves for Ahmedabad with the bodies of the 58 persons who were killed in the S6 coach of Sabarmati Express.

February 28, 2002

Ahmedabad erupted; worst massacre in Naroda Patiya; curfew imposed in all 30 police station areas. Patel is in touch with Naroda corporator minutes before massacre begins.

**** 2.34 am:** Patel enters Ahmedabad with the 58 bodies of Godhra victims, heads for Sola Civil Hospital.

**** 9.17 am:** Patel calls then state Health Minister Ashok Bhatt and after 10 minutes, leaves for Naroda.

**** 10.11 am:** Patel reaches Naroda and at 10.52 calls one Ashok

Govind Patel of Naroda and speaks to him for 80 seconds. (Ashok Govind Patel, who has been in constant contact with Jaideep Patel, is a BJP corporator from Naroda and an accused in the killing of eight persons in Naroda on February 28, 2002 and also in the case in which Jaideep Patel was named as an accused and which was later closed by the Crime Branch.)

**** 11.05 am:** Patel receives call from a cellphone which was allegedly being used by the prime accused in the Naroda-Patiya massacre, Babu Bajrangi.

The phone is registered in the name of one Priyanka Mahendra Pandya, B/3 Pragat Ghanshyam Society, Ranip. Records reveal that the phone had been carried to Godhra the previous day and was located in Naroda area from morning of February 28, 2002 till 8.28 pm. When contacted by the Sunday Express, Mahendra Pandya, father of Priyanka Pandya, said: "I have been using this cell number for more than year. Three years ago, it was with Babubhai (Babu Bajrangi)." According to the police FIR, the attack on Naroda-Patiya started at 11 am and went on till 8 pm.

**** 11.12 am:** Patel again receives a call from Naroda corporator Ashok Patel.

**** 11.21 am:** Jaideep Patel leaves for Bapunagar area. This was one area in the city which witnessed unprecedented violence and the maximum number of deaths in private firing was reported from this area. This was under the control of DCP R J Savani.

**** 11.32 am:** Reaches Bapunagar and calls Minister Zadafia.

**** 11.37 am:** Key accused in the Naroda-Patiya massacre, Bipin Panchal alias Bipin Auto, calls Patel and speaks for 62 seconds.

**** 11.40 am:** Patel calls then DCP (Zone IV) P B Gondia, under whose jurisdiction Naroda-Patiya and Gulbarg Society fall - 38 persons, including ex-Congress MP Ehsan Jafri, were killed in Gulbarg - and speaks for 85 seconds.

**** 11.52 am:** Patel again calls DCP Gondia and this time speaks for 106 seconds.

**** 11.55 am:** Patel calls Ashok Patel and speaks for 63 seconds.

**** 12.01 am:** Ashok Patel calls back.

**** 12.07 pm:** Patel calls Ashok Patel and speaks for 71 seconds.

**** 12.10 pm:** Patel calls then Naroda BJP MLA Maya Kodnani and speaks for 79 seconds.

**** 12.20 pm:** Patel calls DCP Gondia and speaks for 42 seconds.

**** 12.25 pm:** Patel returns to Naroda.

**** 12.39 pm:** Patel returns to Bapunagar area.

**** 12.57 pm:** Patel receives call from the cellphone being used by Babu Bajrangi.

**** 1 pm:** Bipin Panchal calls Patel and speaks for 86 seconds.

**** 1.17 pm:** Bajrangi calls again.

**** 1.19 pm:** Bipin Panchal calls.

**** 1.23 pm:** Bipin Panchal calls again.

**** 1.43 pm:** Bipin Panchal calls again and speaks for 72 seconds.

**** 3.25 pm:** Patel receives a call from the Chief Minister's Office and speaks for 141 seconds.

**** 7.20 pm:** Patel receives call from a cellphone registered in the name of Sanjay Bhavsar of General Administration Department, Government of Gujarat, and speaks for 102 seconds.

**** 7.24 pm:** Bhavsar calls again.

**** 7.28 pm:** Patel calls Bhavsar.

**** 7.31 pm:** For the first time in the day, Patel calls then Police Commissioner P C Pande and speaks for 47 seconds.

**** 8.29 pm:** Patel returns to Naroda area.

**** 9.11 pm:** Tanmay Mehta, Personal Assistant to the Chief Minister, calls Patel. The conversation lasts 209 seconds.

**** 11.32 pm:** State BJP President Rajendrasinh Rana calls Patel and speaks for 13 seconds.

By midnight, senior police officers, including Joint Commissioner of Police M K Tandon had reached Naroda-Patiya. The massacre was over, the survivors were being moved to hospitals and relief camps hastily set up by the Muslim community at Shah Alam and Dariya Khan Gummat. Another massacre had taken place in Gulbarg Society. Defence Minister George Fernandes arrived in town, the death toll was 125 and counting.

PART TWO

Tracking Naroda's BJP MLA on massacre day (published 22 November 2004)

BJP's Naroda MLA says she wasn't at riot site, cellphone records say she was there. The case against Maya Kodnani was closed for lack of evidence. On that day, 83 were killed, she was in touch with cops and Togadia's brother. Maya Kodnani, the BJP MLA from Naroda, is a practising gynaecologist whose clinic is barely a kilometre from the site of the Naroda-Patiya massacre. Though there was a case of rioting and arson against her in the worst post-Godhra riot incident in which 83 were killed, just months later it was closed because of lack of evidence. "I always knew that the case was false and politically motivated as I had not visited Naroda

when the killings happened. And I knew it would be closed sooner or later. The FIR stated that I was there (Naroda) at about 12.30 pm, but as I was at Sola Civil Hospital, I knew it was a false case and would be closed," she says. However, details of cellphone calls made and received by her show that she, in fact, was in the Naroda area around 12.30 pm. A study of Kodnani's cellphone, which is still in use, reveals that, like fellow accused and VHP leader Jaideep Patel, whose details were published yesterday the BJP leader, too, had been camping in the Naroda area till the evening of February 28, 2002, and was in close contact with those accused in the massacre, police officers, top politicians, and VHP leaders, including the brother of VHP international General Secretary Pravin Togadia. The attacks in Naroda started at 11 am and went on till 8 pm. Excerpts of her cellphone records on the day of the VHP-sponsored Gujarat Bandh in protest against the Godhra train carnage:

February 28, 2002

- ** 7.53 am:** Kodnani leaves her residence for Gandhinagar.
- ** 9.57 am:** Kodnani returns from Gandhinagar and heads straight for Sola Civil Hospital.
- ** 10.37 am:** Kodnani calls the office of then Assistant Commissioner of Police (G Division) M T Rana, under whose jurisdiction Naroda and Meghaninagar fall.
- ** 10.39 am:** Kodnani calls the official cellphone of then Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone IV) P B Gondia, Rana's immediate boss.
- ** 11.23 am:** Kodnani leaves Sola Civil Hospital.
- ** 11.55 am:** Kodnani is in Shahibaug area (her residence is also in Shahibaug area) when she receives a call from Dinesh Togadia, brother of VHP leader Pravin Togadia, and speaks for 128 seconds.
- ** 12.10 pm:** Kodnani receives a call from VHP General Secretary Jaideep

Patel, also one of the accused until the case was closed by the police.

- ** 12.21 pm:** Kodnani receives a call from Nimesh Patel, a resident of Saijapur-Bogha area, adjoining the Naroda-Patiya locality. Patel is one of the accused in the killing of eight persons in Naroda village. After the call, Kodnani moves out and heads towards Naroda.
 - ** 12.37 pm:** Kodnani reaches Naroda.
 - ** 12.40 pm:** Nimesh Patel calls Kodnani.
 - ** 2.10 pm:** Kodnani receives a call from Sri Swami Vivekanand Karnavati Charitable Trust, Maninagar, and speaks for 134 seconds.
 - ** 2.33 pm:** Kodnani receives a call from the official residence of State Education Minister Anandiben Patel in Gandhinagar.
 - ** 2.53 pm:** Kodnani receives a call from the office of the chief whip of BJP legislative party.
 - ** 3.31 pm:** Kodnani receives a call from Ashok Govind Patel of Naroda and speaks for 91 seconds.
- Patel, a BJP corporator, was also an accused in the same case as Dr Jaideep Patel. This case was later closed by the Detection of Crime Branch.
- ** 4.09 pm:** Kodnani leaves Naroda area and heads for Shahibaug.
 - ** 4.52 pm:** Kodnani calls DCP (Zone V) R J Savani, under whose jurisdiction widespread violence was reported from Bapunagar, Odhav, Amraiwadi and Hatkeshwar areas.
 - ** 4.53 pm:** Kodnani calls DCP (Zone VI) B S Jebalia, under whose jurisdiction riots were reported from Vatva, Danilimda and Kagdapith areas.
 - ** 4.55 pm:** Kodnani calls then Additional Commissioner of Police (Sector I) Shivanand Jha, under whose jurisdiction the western areas of the city come. The worst affected within his jurisdiction being Paldi, Vejalpur and Navrangpura areas.

**** 5.01 pm:** Kodnani receives a call from Delhi.

**** 5.46 pm:** Kodnani receives a call from state BJP President Rajendrasinh Rana.

**** 7.03 pm:** Kodnani receives a call from Nimesh Patel. (According to the police FIR of the Naroda-Patiya massacre and the Naroda killings, the attacks started at 11 am and went on till 8 pm. The case against her that was closed

**** FIR 197/02** registered by Ayub Khan Mir Khan Pathan at Naroda police station on March 18, 2002, named Jaideep Patel and then Naroda BJP MLA Dr Maya Kodnani along with at least 10 others for rioting, armed with deadly weapons, dacoity and causing fire with intent to damage property.

****** During the investigation, most of the witnesses turned hostile and the DCP on September 4, 2002 filed a summary report in the court pleading to close the case on the grounds that the FIR had been merged with the police FIR relating to the killing of 8 persons in Naroda village and that the names of Patel and Kodnani be removed as there was no evidence against them.

PART THREE

Tracking cop in-charge of Gulbarg, Naroda (published 23 November 2004)

Top cop in charge of massacre zones was in touch with accused

**** At 10.30 am:** On February 28, 2002, a mob began attacking the Muslim neighbourhood of Gulbarg Society, a few kilometers from the police Commissionerate. Houses were set on fire. Despite frantic calls from residents, help did not arrive. By the evening, 38 people had been burnt alive.

****** At Naroda-Patiya, barely four km away, the attacks began at 11 am. The neighbourhood of poor migrant workers from UP and Karnataka continued to burn for a full nine hours. By then, 83 men, women and children had been killed, most of them burnt alive.

P B Gondia was the DCP in charge of both the areas - which together marked the most horrific day in the post-Godhra violence. His cellphone records show that Gondia spent a lot of time in areas outside his jurisdiction that reported little violence. And that he was in constant touch with the riot-accused, including Nimesh Patel who is accused in the Naroda killings. He was also in touch with accused Jaideep Patel, VHP's Gujarat General Secretary and local BJP MLA Maya Kodnani. Kodnani, as yesterday's report in the Indian Express showed, was in Naroda when the massacre was on, contrary to what she has claimed. When asked why he was in touch with the riot-accused, Gondiya said: "There were several people calling me at that time. Now I do not know to whom all I spoke and about what." Excerpts from the cellphone records of DCP P B Gondia

February 28, 2002

**** 10:39 am:** Just as DCP (Zone IV) P B Gondia reaches Naroda area, he receives a call from Naroda BJP MLA Maya Kodnani. The call lasts 57 seconds.

**** 11:05 am:** Gondia calls Joint Commissioner of Police M K Tandon's office.

**** 11.40 am:** Gondia who is in Thakkarnagar, near Naroda, receives a call from VHP General Secretary Jaideep Patel, who was accused of leading a mob in Naroda, and speaks for 86 seconds.

**** 11:52 am:** Gondia again receives call from Jaideep Patel and speaks for 107 seconds.

**** 11:56 am:** Gondia calls Tandon and immediately moves to Naroda area.

**** 12:20 pm:** Gondia receives a call from Jaideep Patel again and speaks to him for 42 seconds.

**** 12:35 pm:** Gondia is in Meghaninagar area (Gulbarg Society) and returns to Naroda by 12:53 pm.

**** 12:59 pm:** Gondia calls the city police control room.

****** Gondia remains in the Naroda area till 1:44 pm. At 1:53 pm he is in Meghaninagar area but leaves immediately and returns to Naroda. On the way at 1:57 pm, he gets a call from Tandon.

**** 2:13 pm:** Gondia is again in the Meghaninagar area from where he calls Nimesh Patel, an accused in the Naroda village killings. Fifteen minutes later Gondia is in Naroda.

**** 2:46 pm:** Gondia goes back to Meghaninagar and calls ACP M T Rana. Within five minutes, he leaves for the Police Commissionerate and reaches there by 2:55 pm.

**** 3:01 pm:** Gondia receives a call from Nimesh Patel.

**** 3:11 pm:** Gondia has left the Police Commissionerate and heads for Revdi Bazaar, an area which does not fall under his jurisdiction, where little violence has been reported.

**** 3:16 pm:** Gondia receives calls from Police Commissioner P C Pande.

****** Gondia remains at Revdi Bazaar till 4:03 pm and at 4:12 reaches Meghaninagar area.

**** 5:05 pm:** Gondia receives a call from the residence of Naroda BJP MLA Maya Kodnani. The call lasts 81 seconds. Gondia is in Meghaninagar area.

**** 5:15 pm:** Gondia receives a call from ACP Rana and speaks with him for 101 seconds.

**** 5.24 pm and 5.29 pm:** Gondia receives calls from the official residence of the Revenue Minister.

**** 6.55 pm:** Gondia receives a call from Nimesh Patel.

**** 10:06 pm:** Gondia goes to the Naroda area.

**** 10.10 pm:** Gondia receives call from Nimesh Patel.

PART FOUR

Tracking Ahmedabad's police chief (published 24 November 2004) If the Ahmedabad police chief said he can't remember, this should jog his memory. Pande told panel he got to know of Naroda only after killing was over, log shows his colleagues were in touch. Deposing before the Nanavati-Shah riots panel on August 18, 2004, P C Pande, Police Commissioner of Ahmedabad during the riots, said he came to know of the Naroda Patiya violence only at 9.30 pm on February 28, 2002, when "I received information that some persons had been killed there." And it was only around 10 or 11 pm when he went there that he understood the "gravity" of the situation. However, by 9.30 pm, the massacre was long over, 83 had already been killed and Pande's cellphone records show that right through the afternoon, from 2.30 to 9 pm, in fact, he was in regular touch with two police officers in charge of Naroda and Gulbarg Society where the day's second massacre took place. And during the last half hour of the massacre, he received a call from VHP state General Secretary and riot-accused Jaideep Patel. Still, Pande deposed to the Nanavati-Shah Commission that he had not been "receiving any information regarding the serious incidents which followed after 2.30 pm..." Another point on which Pande claimed memory loss was the meeting called by Chief Minister Narendra Modi on the night of the Sabarmati attack, hours after the VHP and the BJP had declared a bandh for the next day. Once again, cell phone records fill the missing blanks. They show that he got several calls from the Chief Minister's office throughout the day and in the hours leading up to the meeting. The people doing the calling? Modi's PS Tanmay Mehta and his additional Principal Secretary Anil Mukhim.

Excerpts of his phone log: February 27, 2002

**** 8.53 am:** (within an hour of Godhra attack): Pande, who is at his residence, receives a call from then MoS (Home) Gordhan Zadafia.

**** 11.05 am:** Pande is at his office and receives a call from then DGP K Chakravarthy.

**** 11.38 am:** Chakravarthy calls again.

**** 12.48 pm:** Chakravarthy calls again.

**** 1.08 pm:** Pande calls then Ahmedabad District Collector Srinivas.

**** 1.53 pm:** Pande receives a call from Zadafia and speaks for 109 seconds.

**** 2.59 pm:** Pande receives a call from Tanmay Mehta, CM Narendra Modi's personal assistant.

**** 3.35 pm:** Pande receives a call from then additional Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, Anil Mukhim.

**** 3.36 pm:** Pande receives a call from Mehta. Half a minute later, Mukhim calls again.

**** 3.40 pm:** Pande receives a call from Minister Zadafia.

**** 3.50 pm:** Pande receives a call from DGP Chakravarthy.

**** 5.02 pm:** Pande receives a call from Mukhim. He returns the call after a minute.

**** 5.28 pm:** Pande receives a call from Chakravarthy and speaks for 107 seconds.

**** 6.03 pm:** Pande receives a call from Mumbai and speaks for 154 seconds.

**** 7.09 pm:** Pande calls Mukhim and speaks for 83 seconds.

**** At 7.48 pm and 8.14 pm:** Pande receives two calls from the District Collector.

**** 8.26 pm:** Pande receives a call from Sanjay Bhavsar, OSD to CM.

**** 9.13:** Pande receives a call from Chakravarthy and speaks for 52 seconds.

**** 9.18 pm and 9.19 pm:** Pande receives calls from Zadafia.

**** 9.42 pm:** Pande has left the city for Gandhinagar and is half way through.

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**** 12.35 am:** Pande returns from Gandhinagar and heads straight for his office. He stays there till around 1 am.

**** 8.12 am:** Pande is back in office and receives a call from Chakravarthy.

**** 8.50 am:** Pande calls Chakravarthy.

**** 9.30 am:** Chakravarthy calls Pande and speaks for 126 seconds.

**** 9.44 am:** Pande receives a call from then Joint Commissioner of Police (Sector II) M K Tandon. Three minutes later, Pande is on his way to Sola Civil Hospital.

**** 10.56 am:** Pande returns to the Police Commissionerate.

**** 11.05 am:** Pande receives a call from Chakravarthy. (By this time mobs have taken to streets. According to police records, the attack on Gulbarg Society started at 10.30 am while it started at 11 am at Naroda-Patiya.)

**** 11.31 am:** Pande receives call from the office of Zadafia.

**** 11.40 am:** Pande receives a call from Tanmay Mehta, Narendra Modi's PA.

**** 11.43 am:** Pande receives a call from Tandon, who has already reached the Meghaninagar area (where Gulbarg Society is).

**** 11.56 am:** Pande receives a call from Chakravarthy.

**** 12.06 pm:** Pande calls Tandon and speaks for 75 seconds.

Three minutes after this call, Tandon leaves Meghaninagar.

**** 12.37 pm:** Pande receives a call from Tandon. By this time curfew has been imposed in the city.

**** 1.21 pm:** Pande receives a call from Mehta.

**** 1.22 pm:** Pande receives a call from Tandon.

**** 1.45 pm:** Pande receives a call from Chakravarthy and speaks for 116 seconds.

**** 1.56 pm:** Pande receives a call from the office of state minister Narottam Patel and speaks for 125 seconds.

**** 2.02 pm:** Pande receives a call from Tandon and speaks for 125 seconds.

**** 2.12 pm:** Pande receives a call from Chakravarthy.

**** 2.25 pm:** Pande receives a call from Tandon.

**** 2.53 pm:** Pande receives a call from Zadafia.

**** 3.09 pm:** Pande receives a call from then state Health Minister Ashok Bhatt.

**** 3.16 pm:** Pande calls then Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone IV) P B Gondia, under whose jurisdiction Gulbarg and Naroda-Patiya localities fall.

**** 3.22 pm:** Pande receives a call from city MLA and state minister Kaushik Patel and speaks for 60 seconds.

**** 3.38 pm:** Pande receives a call from Mehta.

**** 3.54 pm:** Pande calls Gondia.

**** 3.57 pm:** Pande receives a call from Mehta.

**** 3.59 pm:** Pande receives a call from Chakravarthy. Minutes later, Chakravarthy is at Pande's office.

**** 5.16 pm:** Pande receives a call from Zadafia, who has just left the Police Commissionerate.

**** 5.17 pm:** Pande receives a call from a cellphone registered in the name of A P Patel of General Administration Department, Govt of Gujarat.

**** 5.50 pm:** Pande receives a call from Tandon.

**** 6.31 pm:** Pande receives a call from the official residence of city MLA and then state Health Minister Ashok Bhatt and speaks for 232 seconds.

**** 6.51 pm:** Pande receives a call from Chakravarthy, who is by then at Gandhinagar.

**** 7.09 pm:** Pande reaches the Meghaninagar area.

**** 7.11 pm:** Pande receives a call from Zadafia.

**** 7.26 pm:** Pande receives a call from Mehta.

**** 7.31 pm:** Pande receives a call from VHP leader and riot accused Jaideep Patel. Pande leaves the Meghaninagar area and goes back to his office.

**** 8.52 pm:** Pande calls Chakravarthy and speaks for 110 seconds.

**** 9.03 pm:** Pande calls Anil Mukim, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister, and speaks for 229 seconds.

**** 9.14 pm:** Pande receives a call from Mukim.

**** 9.18 pm:** Pande calls Chakravarthy and speaks for 334 seconds.

**** 10.27 pm:** Pande receives a call from Mehta.

PART FIVE

Tracking Joint Commissioner (published 25 November 2004)

Top cop said lines were jammed, records show just the opposite. JCP says no idea when Gulbarg attack began; fact: he was at site. Joint Commissioner of Police (Sector II), Ahmedabad, M K Tandon - who was in charge of areas that saw the worst two massacres - told the Nanavati-Shah Commission that he did not come to know about the attack on Gulbarg

Society till 2 pm on February 28. In this, 38 were killed, many burnt alive, including ex-Congress MP Ehsan Jafri. "I was not present when the mob was being dispersed as I had gone near the Gulbarg Society at about 10.45 am and then had gone to Naroda. I was in Naroda at about 12 pm," he deposed. However, records of Tandon's official cellphone reveal that between 11.34 am and 12.09 pm, he was in the Meghaninagar area (where Gulbarg Society is). From Meghaninagar, records show, he called up the DCP in charge of the area and then Police Commissioner P C Pande. (According to police records, violence had started at Gulbarg Society at 10:30 and went on till 7 pm.) He also told the commission that he came to know about the Naroda - Patiya massacre only at 9.30 p.m. "I do not know when the mob entered this Muslim locality and I also do not know if the police officials present on the spot tried to contact me during this time. I think that during this time, the telephone lines were jammed. I first came to know about this incident (Naroda-Patiya) at 9.30 pm when I was in the Gulbarg Society and immediately rushed there," he said. But his cellphone details reveal that he was constantly in touch with the police officers who were in direct charge of the riot-hit areas, and the police control room called him at least four times between 1.24 pm and 3.01pm. When contacted, Tandon refused to comment. Excerpts from his cellphone records:

February 27, 2002

- ** 9.50 am:** Tandon receives a call from the police control room.
- ** 10.05 am:** Tandon calls the police control room.
- ** 10.08 am:** Tandon again calls the police control room.
- ** 10.09 am:** Tandon calls DCP (Zone IV) P B Gondia. Immediately, he receives a call from DCP (Zone V) R J Savani.
- ** 10.11 am:** Tandon receives a call from DCP (Zone VI) B S Jebalia.

- ** 10.12 am:** Tandon receives a call from DCP Savani.
- ** 10.17 am:** Tandon receives a call from ACP M T Rana.
- ** 11.31 am:** Tandon reaches the commissionerate and calls DCP Savani and speaks for 70 seconds.
- ** 11.56 am:** Tandon receives a call from Savani and speaks for 160 seconds.
- ** 12.16 pm:** Tandon again receives a call from Savani.
- ** 12.57 pm:** Tandon calls DCP Jebalia.
- ** 12.58 pm:** Tandon calls DCP Savani and speaks for 128 seconds.
- ** 2.59 pm:** Tandon receives a call from DCP Savani.
- ** 3.18 pm:** Tandon calls DCP Jebalia.
- ** 3.49 pm:** Tandon again calls DCP Jebalia and speaks for 84 seconds. Minutes later, Tandon leaves the commissionerate and goes to Revdi Bazaar, a communally sensitive area.
- ** 4.02 pm:** Tandon receives a call from DCP Jebalia.
- ** 4.22 pm:** Tandon receives a call from DCP Jebalia.
- ** 4.25 pm:** Tandon calls DCP Savani. Tandon goes to the New Cloth Market where office of DCP (Zone VI) is also situated.
- ** 4.39 pm:** Tandon calls DCP Savani.
- ** 5.20 pm:** Tandon calls Police Commissioner P C Pande and speaks for 104 seconds. Tandon leaves and heads towards Bapunagar and Naroda areas.
- ** 5.49 pm:** Tandon calls DCP Savani.
- ** 5.57 pm:** Tandon receives a call from the police control room.
- ** 6.05 pm:** Tandon receives a call from ACP Rana. Tandon is then in the Rakhial area.
- ** 6.46 pm:** Tandon reaches Bapunagar and receives a call from ACP Rana.

**** 6.59 pm:** Tandon reaches the Naroda area and calls DCP Gondia.

**** 7.17 pm:** Tandon returns to the commissionerate.

**** 8.42 pm:** Tandon calls DCP Savani and speaks for 232 seconds.

**** 8.55 pm:** Tandon receives a call from DCP Savani.

**** 9.34 pm:** Tandon receives a call from DCP Savani and speaks for 481 seconds.

**** 10.32 pm:** Tandon receives a call from DCP Savani and speaks for 100 seconds.

Februrary 28, 2002

**** 12.00 am:** Tandon receives a call from Savani. Immediately, he calls up then MoS Home Gordhan Zadafia and speaks for 133 seconds.

**** Three minutes later,** Savani calls Tandon and speaks for 96 seconds.

**** 6:49 am:** Tandon receives a call from Delhi and speaks for 126 seconds.

**** An hour later,** Tandon speaks to all his three DCPs, Gondia, Savani and Jebalia at length.

**** Between 9:20 am and 9:36 am:** Tandon speaks at length with DCPs Savani and Jebalia and then speaks to police commissioner Pande.

**** 11.20 am:** Tandon calls ACP M T Rana of Meghaninagar and Naroda areas.

**** 11.34 am:** Tandon reaches Meghaninagar (Gulbarg Society is there) when he calls DCP Gondia, under whose jurisdiction both the areas fall. Ten minutes later, he calls the Police Commissioner and then makes two successive calls to the city police control room.

**** 12.06 pm:** Tandon receives a call from Pande. Three minutes later Tandon leaves Meghaninagar area.

**** 12.11 pm:** Tandon reaches the Naroda area.

**** Between 12:14 pm and 12:18 pm:** he makes three calls to Pande and once to the police control room at 12:26 pm.

**** 12.33 pm:** Tandon receives a call from DCP Savani and leaves Naroda.

**** 12.37 pm:** Tandon calls Pande.

**** 12.41 pm:** Tandon calls ACP Rana. Tandon is travelling through Bapunagar, Rakhial and reaches Relief Road at 1:56 pm. Till about 4 pm Tandon remains in the Relief Road and Revdi Bazaar areas.

**** While Tandon is not in any of the riot-hit areas within his jurisdiction, his cellphone details reveal he was constantly in touch with the DCPs Gondia, Savani and Jebalia, the police control room, Pande and then city Mayor Himmatsinh Patel during this time.**

The police control room called him at least four times between 1:24 pm and 3:01 pm.

**** 4:12 pm:** Tandon reaches the police commissionerate.

**** 4.28 pm:** Tandon reaches the Meghaninagar area (Gulbarg Society).

**** 10:14 pm:** Tandon visits the Naroda area and leaves by 11:03 pm.

Recalling the calling

**** When asked to explain his cell records, Jaideep Patel said: "I don't remember who all I spoke to, it's been a long time since Godhra. But I brought the bodies to Ahmedabad, I might have spoken to cops as some Godhra victims could have been from Naroda. I might have spoken to people in the government, I do not know. After all, I am a leader of the Hindus, several people speak to me everyday. It can't be said that because I spoke to certain persons, something happened somewhere."**

**** Why was Minister Gordhan Zadafia in touch with Jaideep Patel?**

Zadafia: "When the inquiry commission will ask...I will reply. If I'm

speaking to different persons who I think can help me restore normalcy, there is nothing wrong.”

**** Why did the Chief Minister’s Office contact Jaideep Patel?**

PS Tanmay Mehta, who made the call: “I do not know anything about this.”

**** Did the Crime Branch study the cellphone records before closing the case against Patel?**

Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime) P P Pandey: “There are certain aspects about it yet to be looked into. As the Police Commissioner is on leave, I cannot comment.”

**** Will the review panel, set up at the behest of the Supreme Court, look into these records while scrutinising the 2,100 closed riot cases?**

DGP A K Bhargav who heads the panel: “These cellphone records have little value, they do not prove anything. Yes, these can be used to trace the movements of an accused.”

**** Where were you when the worst massacre took place in your constituency?**

Maya Kodnani “I had gone to Gandhinagar early morning and on return had gone straight to Sola Civil Hospital where I stayed till afternoon. I then went to Ahmedabad Civil Hospital to check on the injured brought from Godhra. I then went home and stayed there for the rest of the day.”

Why did a victim of the massacre file a case against you?

“Somebody from the relief camp complained to the police based on which an FIR was registered.” Deputy Commissioner of Police RJ Savani

**** Records reveal that you were in constant touch with local VHP and political leaders**

“Only CDs have been submitted to the inquiry commission and not cellphone-wise detailed report. Then, how can you say this? It’s common for local leaders to call and speak to us cops. That does not mean that the talk we had was anti-national, against a particular section of the society. Many Muslim leaders had also called me for help.”

Your area witnessed the worst violence in the city.

“The media is responsible for it. It repeatedly showed the Godhra incident and it was carried so big in the newspapers that people got instigated.” Then Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone IV) P B Gondia

**** You were in charge of the zone which saw the worst massacres. Why were you in touch with the riot-accused?**

“There were several people calling me at that time. Now, I do not know to whom all I spoke and about what. Also, I have not seen the telephone records and till I do so I cannot comment further. And there is always a possibility that someone might be using someone (else)’s cellphone. Now I cannot see their faces and so have to believe their identity as revealed verbally over the phone.”

** When contacted at his residence in Delhi, former Ahmedabad Police Chief P C Pande said: “I would not like to comment on anything.” Pande, who was moved to the CBI after his stint as Ahmedabad Commissioner, was recently moved out by the Government. The Government was acting on a commitment it gave to the Supreme Court on a PIL challenging his appointment to the agency.

Shows state role, need for a CBI probe: Left & Cong

** Prakash Karat (Senior Politburo member, CPM): The report strengthens the case for ensuring Central intervention, investigation by an agency like the CBI to pursue prosecution of the guilty.

**** Nilotpal Basu (CPM leader in RS):** Let's hope the prosecution will take note of these inputs. This expose strengthens the points we raised in Parliament that the state government manipulated the violence.

**** Congress spokesman Anand Sharma:** The BJP leadership owes an explanation on what action they propose to take in the light of the new evidence. BJP leaders can't claim now they were not even present during rioting.

**** D Raja (CPI):** It shows that without active connivance of the state government and the ruling party, such communal carnage could not have taken place in Gujarat.

**** Abani Roy (RSP):** The Express investigation reveals to what extent the establishment was involved in the riots. It demands a more thorough probe.

'Nothing can be proved without transcript of calls'

RANCHI: Reacting to the Indian Express expose on the Gujarat riots, former Union Minister Harin Pathak said on Wednesday: "I fail to understand what the media wants to prove just by referring to mobile calls. Nobody has denied their presence in Ahmedabad city at that time. MLA Maya Kodnani resides in Naroda and she was naturally there. So without transcripts of the phone calls, nothing can be proved." Guilty should be booked: Khursheed

NEW DELHI: UP Congress President Salman Khursheed said here that the political system must respond and book the people who failed to discharge their duties to protect the people during the Gujarat riots. Referring to the Indian Express investigation, Khursheed said "I am delighted to see public-minded investigative journalism being able to unearth such telling information and unsparingly critical of irresponsible people holding public offices." ■■■■■