

# REVIEW OF URDU PRESS

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## Former Vice President Hamid Ansari Embroided in Another Controversy



- PFI Backs Farmers' Protest
- Arab Nations Prohibit Foreign Travellers Due to Covid-19
- Situation in Afghanistan gets Tense
- Yogi Government Takes Action Against Madrasas

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## **Contents**

Summary	03
<b><u>National</u></b>	
Former Vice President Hamid Ansari embroiled in another controversy	04
PFI and other extremist Muslim organisations back farmers' protest	09
Punjab and UP governments tussle over custody of Mukhtar Ansari	10
Comedian Munawar Faruqui released on bail	13
Union Budget and Muslims	14
<b><u>World</u></b>	
Situation in Afghanistan gets tense	16
'Hijab' no more mandatory for schoolgirls in Indonesia	17
Controversy over release of American journalist's killers	18
Rise in blasphemy cases in Pakistan	19
Muslim women soldiers allowed to wear hijab in South Africa	20
<b><u>West Asia</u></b>	
Three Arab nations prohibit foreign travellers due to Covid-19	21
USA gives another shock to Saudi Arabia	22
Protest in Sudan against normalisation of ties with Israel	23
Israeli Prime Minister visits United Arab Emirates	24
Establishment of Interim Government in Libya	24
<b><u>Others</u></b>	
Yogi government takes action against madrasas	26
State-wide campaign for the spread of Islam by Imarat Shariah	26
Dispute over ban on Namaz in mosque	27
World Urdu Award in the name of Urdu litterateur	28

## Summary

The process of coming together of extremist Islamic organisations and Khalistan supporters, which started during anti-CAA agitations at Shaheen Bagh, has taken a new turn. Now radical Islamic organisations like the Popular Front of India and Jamaat-e-Islami have infiltrated the farmers' movement. Several Muslim organisations have also openly announced their support to movement. The politics of western Uttar Pradesh has taken a new turn. Jat leaders have once again formed an alliance with Muslim leaders, which had broken off seven years ago after the riots in Shamli.

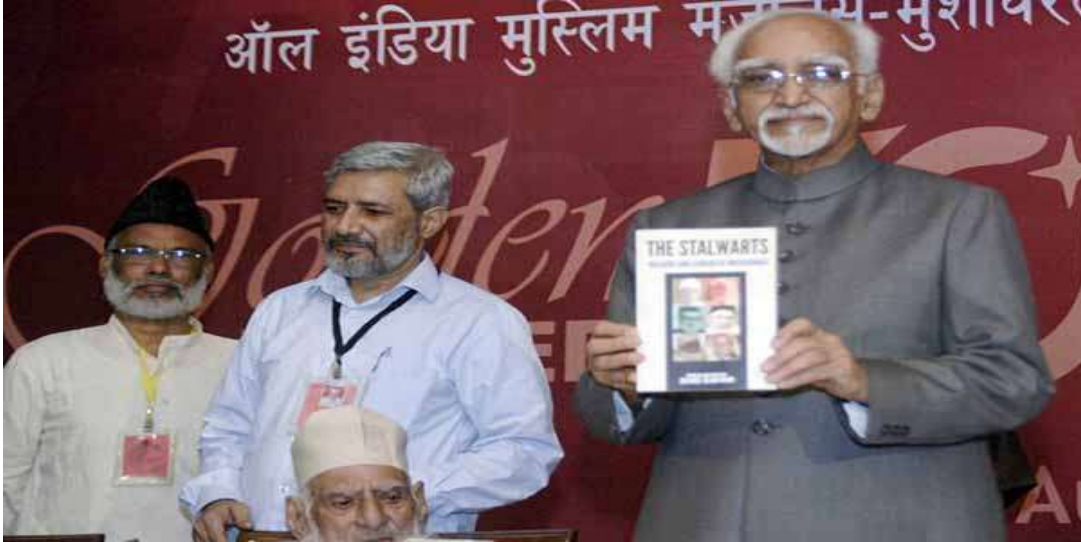
Congress leader and former Vice President of India Mohammad Hamid Ansari is once again in the grip of controversy. Recently he published his autobiography, in which he has said that after the Modi government came to power, there has been a feeling of insecurity among the Muslims in India. He added that the term secularism has disappeared from the current government's lexicon. Ansari has also complained that the reason he is being targeted by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is because he refused to defy the rules in getting the government legislations passed in the Rajya Sabha, despite instructions from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to do so. Ansari has become the focus of discussion in Urdu newspapers of late. It needs to be noted that Ansari has been involved in many controversies for a long time.

The Governments of Pakistan and the USA are embroiled in the dispute over the release of The Wall Street Journal's correspondent Daniel Pearl's killers from the prison. On September 11, 2001, American journalist Daniel Pearl was kidnapped from Karachi in Pakistan while he was trying to gather information about Islamic terrorist organisations linked to the attack on the World Trade Center. A month later, his body was found with the head severed. Police arrested Ahmed Omar Sheikh, an Islamic terrorist of British origin, along with four other terrorists in this regard. These people were given capital punishment by the court. But later the Sindh High Court quashed the decision. For the last 20 years, these terrorists have been lodged in Pakistani jails. Last year, the Sindh High Court ordered for their release from jail and this year the Supreme Court of Pakistan also approved the decision. When this matter was raised by the media, the US government expressed its displeasure and put pressure on the Pakistan government to allow the murder trial to be conducted in the US. Due to pressure from the US, the Government of Pakistan has now filed a review petition in the Supreme Court demanding that the decision to release the accused be quashed.

The situation in Afghanistan is getting more tense and explosive. Last year, the Trump administration entered into an agreement with the Taliban under which it was decided that the United States would withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. Now the new US President Joe Biden has announced a change in its Afghan policy. After this, the Taliban has threatened that if the US cancels the old agreement, it will have terrible consequences and a new fierce war will break out in the country, which will not be in anyone's interest.

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has once again intensified in Arab countries. Due to this, countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait have banned the entry of foreign nationals. Along with this, other activities have also been partially halted. US President Joe Biden has announced the cancellation of defence treaties with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The US administration hoped that this would improve its relations with Iran. But the government of Iran has dealt a deep blow to America. A spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry has announced that no talks would be held until the US removes all sanctions imposed on Iran.

## Former Vice President Hamid Ansari embroiled in another controversy



According to **Mumbai Urdu News** (February 1), former Vice President Mohammad Hamid Ansari, talking about his new book in an interview to a news channel, Zee News said that the word 'secularism' has disappeared from the current government's lexicon. He repeatedly clashed with the anchor about the feeling of insecurity among Muslims and later questioned the anchor's mind-set and left the interview midway. When Ansari was asked if the word was there in the government's dictionary that was in power before 2014, he replied in the affirmative. After this, the anchor started asking him questions on Hindu terrorism, insecurity among Muslims, mob lynching etc. The anchor said that he had been the Vice President of India for ten years, the Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University and the Chairman of the National Minorities Commission. The anchor pointed out that the country had given him so much and questioned his reasons for saying that Muslims are insecure in this country. On this, Ansari said that he made such a statement after

seeing the sentiments of the people. When the anchor repeatedly asked him what makes him think that the Muslims are insecure, Ansari in his reply told him to read his book carefully. The anchor said that the purpose of the interview was not to promote the book, but to question the views expressed in that book. When the anchor kept asking Ansari for reasons why Muslims are feeling insecure, the latter got angry and lashed out at the anchor and said that his mind-set was not right. The anchor in his response said that there was no pressure on Ansari to give the interview. It is known that when Hamid Ansari was the Vice President, at an event in Bengaluru, he alleged that the feeling of insecurity among the Muslims was increasing rapidly.

According to **Avadhnama** (February 5), the new book of former Vice President Hamid Ansari which is based on his life and experiences is a topic of discussion everywhere. In this book, he had presented the events relating to his life with frankness and honesty. The book has been receiving varied reactions from different sections. Hamid Ansari has argued that it is not just

the Supreme Court, but many other statutory institutions have also failed to some extent. He said that incidents of intolerance are increasing in the country. The reason for this is that it has the support of the government. This is why the situation of minorities has deteriorated. He said that minorities should be treated in the same way as other citizens of the country. He urged everyone to read the Constitution which speaks of equality, justice and brotherhood for all. Justice and fraternity are the basis of every society. He added that if fellow citizens are not treated equally, then justice cannot be ensured.

On the Gujarat riots, he said that after the Godhra riots of 2002, the relief that should have been given by the state government to those affected in these riots was not delivered. The intention that should have been there was missing. It has been 18 years since the Godhra riots happened. A whole generation has grown up and they have learnt to live in an environment of injustice. The condition of minorities in the country has worsened. Laws made on love jihad, *Ghar Wapsi* (back to home) and conversion are meant to divert public attention from real problems such as poverty and the demand for development. He said that secularism is part of the Constitution, but it is not being implemented. He opined that the spirit of the Constitution is being ignored. He said that the idea of majority society that the BJP government is promoting will harm the country. It is against the principles of brotherhood and equality that should be prevalent in a society. While discussing the conflict with China, he said that so far, the government has not dealt with it properly. He pointed out that there are other problems too. He said this situation should be discussed and it has to be ensured that the situation does not get out of control. Expressing his opinion on the citizenship law, he said that there are some aspects to it

which need clarification. He added that everybody is a citizen of this country and if citizenship is questioned, he has every right to oppose it.

According to **Siasat** (February 1), the Vice President said that problems are increasing for Muslims in India with every passing day. The current government's dictionary does not contain the word secularism. It has almost disappeared from government offices. He said that such a mind-set has taken shape in different parts of the country which has made the lives of minorities difficult. Some people are not aware of the secret plans of the government. He said that Muslims have started getting concerned about their peace and security. The incidents of mob killings have frightened the minorities of this country. It is clear that the present government has poisoned the hearts and minds of Indian people.

The daily **Inquilab** in its issue dated February 4 has published an article by veteran Urdu journalist Masoom Muradabadi in which he said he recollected an incident from Ansari's book where the latter said that once Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to meet him all of a sudden and complained that Ansari was not helping him and Bills were not being passed amidst the ruckus in Rajya Sabha. Hamid wrote in his book that as the Speaker of the House, he had decided that no Bill would be allowed to pass during commotion and noise. This usually caused trouble to the governments. But the Modi government felt that because it has majority in the Lok Sabha, it has got the license to subvert the rules of the Rajya Sabha. Ansari wrote in his book that he had told Prime Minister Modi that when BJP leader Arun Jaitley was the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, he had also agreed that no Bill should be passed when there is commotion.

The Prime Minister had also complained that the programs aired by Rajya Sabha TV were not in favour of the government. To this, Ansari made it clear that there is no interference from his side regarding the functioning of the channel and all the decisions in this regard are made by an all-party committee of Rajya Sabha of which the BJP is also a member. Ansari has written that a speech delivered by him in August 2015 at the Golden Jubilee celebrations of All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat was criticised by the ruling party. This autobiography of Hamid Ansari which is in English has been published under the title, 'By Many a Happy Accident: Recollections of a Life.' Muradabadi alleged in his article that the Zee News correspondent who had interviewed Ansari tried to deliberately ensnare him. He added that Hamid Ansari is a Muslim leader who has dared to present the problems of Muslims with complete honesty and transparency.

In the February 8 edition of the daily **Sahafat**, Rasiduddin Khan, strongly endorsed former Vice President Mohammad Hamid Ansari and said that those who speak without any fear becomes popular amongst the public but becomes an irritant for the ruling government. Clarity of speech never found favour in the corridors of power and in the capitalist circles. There are very few people who, regardless of their positions, have not compromised on their principles and have lived by their values and ideals. Dr. Hamid Ansari retired as Vice President three years ago and the writer has asked in his article why is it that he is still seen as a threat by the Sangh Parivar and the 'Godi media?' What has Hamid said which made the government lose sleep and they had to field the Godi media to provide a counter to it? Muslims of India are suffering from feelings of restlessness and insecurity. Hamid Ansari has exasperated the Sangh

and its supporters so badly that they have started labelling him as a radical.

Dr Hamid Ansari in an interview given to Rajya Sabha TV during the last days of his tenure said that the country's Muslims are being oppressed and there is a feeling of insecurity among them. This controversy has been following the Narendra Modi government from that time. The statement that Hamid Ansari made was a result of his long years of experience. When he was the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, the BJP wanted Hamid Ansari's cooperation in implementing the government's policies. Because the BJP did not have a majority in the Rajya Sabha, they wanted Ansari's cooperation in arbitrarily passing various legislations that were tabled. But when Ansari refused to go against the written rules, BJP was unable to tolerate it. The BJP and the Sangh Parivar are worried that the autobiography of Hamid Ansari will expose the real face of Modi and his government. Modi needs flattery at every level. How can a government that does not tolerate farmers raising their voice in protest, tolerate a thinker like Hamid Ansari?

The newspaper said that Hamid Ansari has evoked the memories of Dr Zakir Hussain. Both of them are personalities in whose eyes the post held no importance. They did not appear like *Sarkari Muslims*. They never acted against Islam. The BJP did not like the honesty and ideals of Ansari. The UPA government did not do any favour by making him the Vice-President. He was given the responsibility on the basis of his merit. An anchor of Godi media had tried to trap Hamid Ansari but a seasoned diplomat like him did not fall for it. Rather, he put the anchor in his place. The arrests and incidents of oppression of Muslims citing various reasons in Uttar Pradesh had shaken Ansari to the core. Usually, most people raise their voices only when they step down from the

positions of power, but Ansari chose to do it while he was still in office and this display of courage was not liked by the BJP. Why is that there is so much uproar only when his autobiography is about to reach the market? It is evident that the BJP and the Sangh Parivar are scared that their real face will be exposed in the public and India's image will be ruined in front of the world.

An article by Mufti Manzur Ziyae which was published in **Mumbai Urdu News** (February 3), stated that even a respected person like former Vice President has confirmed that Muslims are scared today. Even during the freedom struggle, the Muslims were intimidated and this fear was spread in an organised manner after the country got independence. During the Congress rule, Muslims were told that if they did not vote for Congress, then the communal elements will chew them raw. Because of this, the Muslims kept voting for Congress for a very long time. When the Congress got disillusioned with the Muslims, the Muslims took refuge in the lap of parties who supposedly stood for secularism. But the treatment they got was almost the same.

Each and every political party used Muslims as a political tool to gain power. The Congress remained in power for several decades at the Centre as well as in various states. Meanwhile, idols were kept inside the Babri Masjid which resulted in the demolition of the mosque in 1992. The Urdu language was also almost wiped out as per a planned move. The proportion of Muslims in government jobs kept declining rapidly. Muslims were unable to get seats in proportion to their population in Parliament and state legislative assemblies. This happened because the law was made in such a way that the Muslims could never get their rightful share. Muslim candidates won only from Muslim dominated areas. The truth is that even the biggest of all

secular leaders do not have enough standing to ensure that the non-Muslim votes go to a Muslim candidate. The leaders of the parties also feared that Hindus might get angry with them. Therefore, the secular parties did not try to give Muslims their legitimate rights. The first incident of dishonesty started with the distribution of tickets and it continues even to this date.

After independence, there were thousands of communal riots in which Muslims lost their lives and property. After every major riot, commissions were formed to investigate the reasons for the riots and to give probable solutions, but their reports were never implemented. The UPA government was a horde of all so-called secular parties. It formed the Sachar Committee and Justice Sachar in his report had explained what Muslims have gained from the Congress and its allies in the 50-55 years of independence. There was a lot of demand to implement the Sachar Committee report, but nothing happened. Today, Muslims are trying to overcome their fears and get out of their shells. The Congress, which kept the Muslims scared for half a century and ruled on the basis of their fear, has been discarded by the people. After Congress, the other so-called secular parties have also treated Muslims in a similar manner. Lalu Yadav was the ruler of Bihar for fifteen years. It is true that there were no big riots in Bihar during his reign, but the condition of Muslims did not improve in all these years. The situation is the same in West Bengal too. Mamata, Congress and the Left parties are eyeing the Muslim vote bank. But now the Muslims have become smarter and will not be misled by anyone. From Nehru to Rahul, they could not give any legitimate rights to Muslims and the record of other so-called secular parties is even worse.

**Comment:** Former Vice President Hamid Ansari has found himself in

controversies from the very beginning. He has often been accused of being an ideologically staunch Muslim. He was born in 1937 in Kolkata and was educated at Aligarh Muslim University. In 1961, he joined the Indian Foreign Service and was India's ambassador to a dozen countries. In 1984, he was honoured with the Padma award. He was also the Vice Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University from May 2000-2004. In 2007, Congress fielded him in the Vice-Presidential election and he won the election. In 2012, his tenure was extended by five years. Speaking at the farewell ceremony, Ansari had made the sensational claim that Muslims are not safe in the country. It is being said that on 30 December 2011 which was the last day of the winter session of Parliament and due to the Anna Hazare movement, the Lokpal Bill was being hotly debated. After midnight, Ansari took over as the Chairperson of the House and instead of putting the matter to vote, he adjourned the House indefinitely. It was alleged that Ansari took this step to save the Congress government from defeat.

### **Long list of controversies**

Some former officials of India's premier intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alleging that when Hamid Ansari was the Indian Ambassador to Iran, he leaked some valuable information to the Government of Iran and the country's intelligence agency, thereby sabotaging an important operation of R&AW. Sandeep Kapoor, an officer of the R&AW, was arrested by Iran's intelligence agency. At that time, the Indian Foreign Ministry had directed its Ambassador Hamid Ansari to personally intervene and try to get Kapoor released. But Ansari ignored this instruction from New Delhi and gave a false report to the Indian government that Sandeep Kapoor

was missing. These officers also alleged that the R&AW had received information that some Kashmiri terrorists were given covert weapons training in the city of Qom in Iran. But this information was leaked by Ansari to the Government of Iran.

On the initiative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the United Nations had declared June 21 as International Yoga Day and in 2015 the first Yoga Day was celebrated. But Vice President Hamid Ansari was missing from the event. Ansari's absence was also questioned by BJP general secretary Ram Madhav. The same year, the issue of Ansari not saluting the national flag during the Republic Day parade was also discussed.

When a person named Akhlaq was killed in Greater Noida, Ansari did not hesitate to comment on the incident. He had directly accused the Modi government and said that the Central Government should stop discrimination against Muslims. Three years ago, when the Supreme Court made the national anthem mandatory before the commencement of films in theatres, the Madras High Court gave a decision regarding *Vande Mataram*. Commenting on that, Ansari said that he would call it a feeling of insecurity. He added that showing one's nationalism at all times is ridiculous and it is enough that he is an Indian.

In 2018, when the controversy erupted over the installation of pictures of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan at Aligarh University, Ansari wrote a letter to the students' association supporting the move. The same year, he had made his intention clear by giving his statement in favour of Sharia courts. He had said that people are confusing social practices with law and order. In India, personal law applies to marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance. Every community has a right to follow their personal laws.



## PFI and other extremist Muslim organisations back farmers' protest

According to **Inquilab (January 31)**, the Chairman of the Popular Front of India (PFI) O.M.A. Salam has condemned the central government's use of force and undemocratic approach to end the peaceful protests of farmers. Salam has also expressed concern over attacks by right-wing goons on farmers. He has alleged that the Sangh Parivar is using violence to put an end to the protests by removing the farmers from the place of protest. The ruling party and its *Godi* media are trying to justify the attacks on the farmers by terming it an organic reaction of the local people to the protests. All efforts of the Central government as well as the Uttar Pradesh government to forcibly put an end to the peaceful and democratic protests of the farmers have failed.

These protests are visible in all regions of Uttar Pradesh and thousands of people are joining these demonstrations. Now, because the government had failed to remove the farmers from the sites of demonstrations, the police have allowed the mischievous elements belonging to the Sangh Parivar to create ruckus at the sites. Salam said that the same tactic was adopted to end the protests in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh against the citizenship laws. There is provocative action against farmers by goons who identify themselves as locals at demonstrations at the Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur border. When the RSS goons were attacking the farmers, the police and RAF personnel stood as mute spectators. The chairman of PFI has appealed to the citizens to stand with the farmers to protect the democratic values of the country.

According to **Roznama Sahara** (December 3), a Jamaat-e-Islami delegation led by Amir Abdul Waheed of Delhi

visited the Delhi-Haryana border and assured the farmers of their full support.

According to **Inquilab** (December 3), Majlis-e-Ulema has also demanded that the government withdraw these black laws. These laws have been enacted by the government under pressure from the capitalists, which is against the interests of both consumers and farmers.

According to **Inquilab** (December 4), Maulana Nisar Ahmad Naqshbandi, President of the Indian Union Muslim League, Delhi, visited the protest site to meet the farmers and said that the present government's policy on agriculture is against national interest. Before the elections, the BJP had promised that it would implement the recommendations of the Swaminathan Committee after coming to power, but the government has given up on its promise and has instead brought anti-farmer legislations.

According to **Inquilab** (December 1), Jamiat-e-Ulema, Haryana and Mewat Vikas Sabha have also supported the demands of the farmers and have urged the government to withdraw these black laws. According to another report, Muslim Personal Law Board convenor Mufti Mohammad Nasim Rahmani, while addressing the farmers at the Singhu border, assured them of the full support of the Muslims and encouraged the farmers to resort to Shaheen Bagh-like protests all across the country.

According to **Inquilab** (December 28), Hafiz Noor Ahmad, General Secretary of the Sunni Ulema Council has condemned the BJP government for its autocratic way of handling the protests. He said that instead of accepting the just demands of the farmers who are detained, the BJP government accused them of being

anti-nationalists. He opined that every person in the country has a constitutional right to protest, but this autocratic government is taking away the people's rights by building walls and forts on the borders of Delhi and it is trying to crush the mass movement by employing Hitler's methods.

According to **Inquilab** (December 14), a delegation of students of Aligarh Muslim University reached the Singhu border and assured the farmers of their full support.

According to **Inquilab** (January 26), the Insaaf Manch (Platform for Justice) performed at various places in Bihar by shouting the slogans, 'Save the country', 'Save the Constitution' and, 'Save agriculture'. A delegation from the Insaaf Manch has sent a memorandum that was supported by Shah Alvi Al Qadri to the President of the country demanding his intervention in the repealing of these three black laws.

According to **Inquilab** (February 8), Kisan Panchayat was organized in Panipat by the Muslim organisation Majlis-e-Ahrar headed by Qari Syed ul Zaman. Various Muslim organisations had participated in

this panchayat and they announced their support to the farmers' protests. It was demanded in the panchayat that the Modi government withdraw all these three black laws.

### **Muslims and Jats unite on farmer union platform**

According to **Inquilab** (January 31), the farmers' movement has re-established unity between Muslims and Jats in the Jat-dominated region of western Uttar Pradesh after eight years. Recently, Muslim leaders joined with their supporters in large numbers in the farmers Mahapanchayat that was held in western Uttar Pradesh. It is known that in 2013 in the village of Shamli near Muzaffarnagar, violent riots had taken place between Muslims and Jats on the issue of molestation of girls which killed at least 65 people and left thousands homeless. After this incident, the Jats joined hands with the BJP. Prominent Muslim leaders who have joined the Mahapanchayat in western Uttar Pradesh include former MP Amir Alam, former MLA Nawazish Alam, MLA Nahid Hussan, Haji Liaquat, former MLA Imran Masood and Ghulam Mohammad Zola.

## **Punjab and UP governments tussle over custody of Mukhtar Ansari**

According to **Inquilab** (February 9), the governments of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab are sparring over the custody of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) MLA and mafia don Mukhtar Ansari. The Uttar Pradesh government has approached the Supreme Court to get the custody of Ansari. There were fierce arguments between the lawyers of the two governments in the court. After this, the court fixed the date of February 24 for hearing the case. The Punjab government claims that Ansari's health is not such that he can be sent to Uttar

Pradesh. While the lawyer of Uttar Pradesh government, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, targeted the Punjab government and observed that the Punjab government's interest in protecting a don cannot be understood. He said that there are more than a dozen cases which are pending in Uttar Pradesh against Ansari and they are being delayed due to his non-appearance in the court. In response, Mukhtar Ansari's lawyer Mukul Rohatgi demanded that all the cases filed in Uttar Pradesh against Ansari should be transferred to Punjab.



Punjab government's lawyer Dushyant Dave said that the Punjab government is acting as per the law and Ansari cannot be sent to Uttar Pradesh on the basis of his medical report. He also demanded the dismissal of the petition filed in the court by the Uttar Pradesh government.

It is known that Ansari is currently lodged in Ropar Jail in Punjab. The government has tried to bring him at least 35 times to Uttar Pradesh, but the jail administration of Punjab sends back the Uttar Pradesh Police every time saying that Mukhtar Ansari is ill. So, the Uttar Pradesh government had filed a petition in December, stating that the Punjab government had filed a case against Mukhtar Ansari on the pretext of bringing him from Banda Jail to Punjab and is now refusing to send him back. The Supreme Court had directed the Punjab government to file a reply. In response, the Punjab government said that it is due to Mukhtar Ansari's ill health that he is not being sent to Uttar Pradesh and this was done on the basis of the report submitted by the doctors. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta pointed out that the cases registered in Uttar Pradesh are serious. Hearing of these serious cases cannot be held simultaneously in Punjab. He said that a criminal gets an FIR registered against him and then he

deliberately does not file his bail application and is seen enjoying life in jail.

An interesting fact is that Mukhtar Ansari has claimed in an affidavit filed in the Supreme Court that he belongs to the family of a freedom fighter and former Vice President Hamid Ansari is his relative. His grandfather Shaukat Ullah Ansari has been the Governor of Orissa and Justice Asif Ansari is also from his family who has been a judge of the Allahabad High Court. On the other hand, the Government of Uttar Pradesh has described Ansari as a terrorist in the Supreme Court and said that the Punjab government is supporting him. Ansari is getting 5-star facilities in Punjab at a time when serious cases including murder charges have been filed against him. He was brought to Punjab in connection with a case two years ago. Since then, the Punjab government has been unwilling to send him back.

Also, several cases against Ansari's sons and wife are pending in Uttar Pradesh. However, Ansari's wife has been granted anticipatory bail in these cases. His wife is accused of being involved in land fraud. The administration had found many irregularities regarding the construction of the Ghazal Hotel. Mukhtar Ansari's wife and her two sons, along with 12 others, were booked in September last year. The

High Court had directed Ansari's sons and his wife to submit their passports to the Ghazipur police. The court granted interim relief to Ansari's two sons, Abbas and Umar, on the basis of furnishing Rs 50,000 personal bonds each and two sureties. The court ordered that Mukhtar's two sons cannot travel abroad and warned them against influencing any of the witnesses in the case related to the Ghazal Hotel land. The court has also clarified that if Abbas and Omar do not comply with the court order, then the investigating officer can apply for cancellation of the anticipatory bail of both.

Mukhtar Ansari has been elected as MLA from Mau for five times. He was accused of killing BJP leader Krishnanand Rai. He was later acquitted of this charge by the court. Mukhtar Ansari is the grandson of the Indian National Congress President Dr. M.A. Ansari. In 1970, the government is said to have initiated several development projects in the Purvanchal region, and there ensued several fights between various mafia gangs for getting the contracts for these projects. Mukhtar Ansari was also involved in one of these gangs. In 1995, Mukhtar Ansari became the leader of the Students Association of the Banaras Hindu University. In 1996, he was elected MLA and he got into a fight with another infamous mafia leader Brijesh Singh. In 2002, in a clash between the two groups, Ansari's three men were killed and Brajesh Singh was injured. To reduce Ansari's influence, his political rival Brajesh Singh supported BJP leader Krishnanand Rai, which led to Ansari's brother Afzal Ansari who was elected five times from Mohammadabad face defeat. Later, Mukhtar Ansari was arrested in a case and jailed. Meanwhile, Krishnanand Rai and his six other associates were shot and killed. Shashikant Rai, an important witness in the case, died in mysterious circumstances in 2006. The police termed

his death a suicide and stalled the case. Ansari's opponent Brajesh Singh escaped from prison. He later formed a new political party named the Pragatisheel Manav Samaj Party. In 2007, Mukhtar Ansari and his brother Afzal Ansari joined the Bahujan Samaj Party. In 2009, Ansari contested from Varanasi on a Bahujan Samaj Party ticket, but had to face BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi in the elections which led to him losing the election. In 2009, he was arrested along with two other persons in connection with the murder of KapilDev Singh. In 2010, another murder case was registered against him. The same year, the two brothers were expelled from the Bahujan Samaj Party. He then formed a new party, the Qaumi Ekta Dal. In March 2014, Ansari contested against Narendra Modi in Varanasi but badly lost the election. In 2017, he again joined the Bahujan Samaj Party and won elections from Mau.

According to the daily, **Sahafat** (February 3), when the police was looking for Abbas Ansari, the fugitive son of Uttar Pradesh MLA Mukhtar Ansari, and a reward of Rs25,000 was announced for information that would lead to his arrest, Abbas Ansari left Uttar Pradesh and reached Rajasthan. There, the Congress government besides giving him complete patronage, also conferred on him the status of a state guest. Interestingly, Abbas Ansari got married there and he had uploaded the photos of the event with great pride. Alka Rai, a BJP MLA from Mohammadabad assembly constituency of Ghazipur, had written a letter to Priyanka Gandhi, requesting her to urge Congress to stop giving protection to criminals which will help people get justice. It is said that the Uttar Pradesh Police is trying to get the custody of Abbas Ansari from Rajasthan police. But they are yet to meet with any success in this regard. ■

## Comedian Munawar Faruqui released on bail

According to **Sahafat** (February 8) comedian Munawar Faruqui, accused of making controversial remarks on Hindu deities, has been released on bail by the Supreme Court. According to the newspaper, the Supreme Court had granted Faruqui's bail. But the officers of Indore jail were evasive in the matter of his release. When the Supreme Court came to know about this, a judge of the court reprimanded the officers of Indore Jail, after which he was released from jail. The jail officials had said that there is a lawsuit against Faruqui in a court in Prayagraj, so there is a legal impediment in releasing him from jail. After his release from prison, Faruqui told reporters that he had full faith in the administration and judicial system of his country. A friend of Faruqui told that when Faruqui was not released from jail, he had contacted the Chief Justice of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, after which Faruqui was released from jail.

Commenting on Faruqui's release, **Mumbai Urdu News** (February 8) said in its editorial that today minorities and especially Muslims in the country are going through a more difficult phase than during the times when TADA was in force. The oppression by the BJP government at the Centre and in the states is showing that there is an era of fascism in the country. The minorities, Muslims, farmers and journalists who have differences of opinion with the government are in a dire state. The moral courage that was earlier seen in the judges is missing now. The judges are no longer able to pronounce open and fearless judgements. They appear to be trying to avoid the decisions that would force the government's muscle. Political observers are repeatedly trying to draw attention to the fact that the judiciary, an important pillar of democracy, has also weakened in



the last few years. When democratic institutions continue to weaken, then anything can happen to anyone, not just with Munawar Faruqui.

It is known that Munawar Faruqui, a comedian from Gujarat, was lodged in the Indore Central Jail since January 1 on charges of making some indecent remarks on Hindu Gods and Goddesses as well as on home minister Amit Shah in his program. He was accused by Eklavya Singh Gaur, son of Malini Laxman Singh Gaur, a BJP MLA. When Faruqui did not get bail from the District Court and the Madhya Pradesh High Court, he had to move the Supreme Court which granted him interim bail. With this, a court of Prayagraj also stayed a warrant that was issued against him in connection with the case filed. But the Indore Central Jail administration refused to release him on the grounds that a court in Prayagraj had issued a warrant against him. So late in the night, a Supreme Court judge called the Chief Judicial Magistrate of Indore and asked him to go through the website of the Supreme Court and ordered him to implement the court's direction. According to Inspector Rajesh Bangde of Indore Central Jail, he had not received this order earlier. A jail official said that after getting the instructions from the Supreme Court from the right sources, the comedian has been ordered to be released from jail on a

bond of Rs 50,000 and a similar amount of security.

According to a report in **The Wire** (Urdu), Munawar Faruqui was arrested on charges of hurting religious sentiments. However, the police later admitted that they had no proof to confirm the allegation. Subsequently, the police had also said that Munawar Faruqui could not be granted bail as he could make comments that may hurt the religious sentiments of Hindus in future. The police also said that Faruqui's arrest was made on the testimony of the son of a BJP MLA, who had claimed that he had heard Faruqui doing a rehearsal of the

comedy act which he was to present in his program. The Supreme Court, while hearing the bail plea, remarked that the directions of the Supreme Court in a similar case in 2014 have not been implemented. It also pointed out that Section 41 of CrPc is not applicable in this case. Along with this, the court also issued a notice to the Government of Madhya Pradesh in this regard. Minorities and all those who have differences with the government and its policies need to be very vigilant in order to avoid action by the police and jail authorities as well as the courts.

## Union Budget and Muslims

**Hamara Samaj** has criticised the Union Budget in its February 2 issue, saying that Muslims and minorities have been neglected in this budget. The Minister of Minority Affairs, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi used to say repeatedly that overall budget for the minority affairs ministry has been increased in the Modi regime. But the budget for 2021-22 has cut Rs 219 crore from the prescribed amount. Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi has in the government's defense said that his ministry's budget had to be cut due to the shock the country's economy had to endure because of the crisis induced by the Covid-19 pandemic. Last year, the amount allocated in the budget for the Ministry of Minority affairs was Rs 5029 crore which has been slashed to Rs 4810 crore. Earlier, the Modi government did a little bit of justice to the minorities, but this year the principle of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' has been put on hold. However, it has also been said that the main reason for the budget cut is because the amount that was earmarked in the budget last year has not been spent. Out of Rs. 5029 crore earmarked in the budget, only Rs4005 crore could be spent. Naqvi

has assured that there will be no scarcity of funds for the ministry.

On the other hand, according to Congress leader and former Minority Affairs Minister K. Rehman Khan, in this budget, injustice has been done to Muslims. Normally, in the budget that is made for various ministries, there is a ten per cent hike every year. If this principle is applied, then the budget for the Ministry of Minority should have been around Rs 8000 crores. He said that the educational, social and economic schemes for minorities will suffer a huge setback with the current allocation. Naqvi has given the assurance that minorities are included in the development plans of 20 other ministries, so this cut will not have any effect. He said that it is the government's endeavour to spend as much money as possible to increase the representation of Muslims in the civil services of the country and this step will enable the students to prepare diligently for the competitive examinations. The students are not only provided special scholarships for this, but they are also given free coaching. The newspaper has also published the details of the annual budget of the Ministry of Minorities for the last several years. According to which, the budget was Rs2600 crore in 2010-11,



which increased to Rs2800 crore in 2011-12. The amount reached Rs3100 crores in 2012-13, Rs3511 crores in 2013-14 and Rs3711 crores in 2014-15. It only increased by Rs 2crores in 2015-16 and reached Rs3713 crores. Rs3800 crores in 2016-17, Rs4195 crores in 2017-18, Rs4700 crores in 2018-19, Rs4700 crores in 2019-20, Rs5029 crores in 2020-21 and Rs4810 crores in 2021-22.

According to the daily, **Siasat** (February3), this Union Budget will not benefit the Muslims, but will only harm them. The burden imposed by the UnionBudget on the citizens will increase the economic backwardness of Muslims. Even though, in the budget of 2020-21, a provision of Rs 5029 crore was made for the minorities, but later a reduction of Rs 1024 crore was made in it, due to which this budget was reduced to Rs 4005 crore. The cuts made in social welfare schemes of various ministries will also have an impact on the welfare of Muslims.

**Avadhnama** (February2) said in its editorial that this budget is disheartening for Muslims and perhaps for the first time, two organisations affiliated to the RSS have criticised this budget and said that it will have a bad impact on the vision of a self-reliant India. By amending the Insurance Act and raising the FDI limit from 49 per cent to 74 per cent, it will increase the country's dependence on foreign nations.

**Siasat** (February2) has stated in its editorial that the government has completely failed to achieve the targets that it had set in the last year's budget.

According to **Etemaad** (February2), in the next year's budget, Rs1378 crore has been allocated for pre-matriculation for Muslims and Rs468 crore for post-matric scholarship. The Minister of Minority Affairs has described this budget as an important step towards achieving self-reliance in the country. The newspaper has alleged that the goal of this budget is to garner votes for the BJP in the upcoming state assembly elections, so finance minister has been very kind to West Bengal as well as Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Assam and huge funds have been provisioned for these states.

**Roznama Sahara** (February2) has termed this budget as disappointing which has caused a lot of disappointment to the jobseekers. In view of the upcoming state elections, Rs 65,000 crore has been allocated for the highway project in Kerala, Rs 25,000 crore for the highway project in West Bengal and Rs 3400 crore for the construction of roads in Assam. The newspaper has criticised that although relations with China and Pakistan are tense, there has been no increase in the defence budget. It added that the budget is also disappointing for Muslims. ■

## Situation in Afghanistan gets tense



According to **Qaumi Tanzeem** (February 4), the stern stand taken by the new US President regarding peace talks between the US and the Taliban in Afghanistan has led to an explosive situation in Afghanistan.

According to **Roznama Sahara** (February 7), the Taliban have insisted that if the US turned its back on its old policy, there could be a fierce war in Afghanistan. Along with this, the Taliban have increased their military activities in that region. US President Joe Biden insisted that peace talks with the Taliban would be continued only when the Taliban cease their attacks on the military. This statement is against the policy that was adopted by the Trump administration. The Taliban has intensified its attacks on the army and has killed at least three dozen fighting troops in two days. The US has indicated that it is postponing the on-going peace talks. A Taliban spokesman has said that if the US withdraws from the peace deal it had agreed to in February last year, it will be taught a lasting lesson.

The new US administration has put on hold the case of withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. A spokesman for

the Afghanistan Defence Ministry has admitted that there has been a spurt in attacks on check posts in Afghanistan by the Taliban recently. In its report, 'The Afghan Study Group' suggested that if the promises made by the US to the Taliban were not implemented, then there could be a fierce civil war in Afghanistan and the terrorist organisation Al Qaeda could take over the country's administration. In a comment on the Taliban website, the Taliban denied the allegation that they were not meeting the conditions laid down in the peace talks. They said that if the US did not fulfil its promise, it would result in a fierce war and the US will be responsible for it. The Taliban has warned the US to stop issuing threats, because it will worsen the situation, which will not be in the interests of the US, Afghanistan and the Taliban. As a result of the agreement between the United States and the Taliban last year, the number of American soldiers has been reduced from 13000 to 2500.

According to another article published in the same newspaper, 19 Taliban militants were killed and 13 injured in a counter attack by the army. Apart from



this, ten Taliban militants have been killed and nine injured in military operations in Kandahar.

According to another news report published in the same newspaper, based on a report by the United Nations, the Islamic State and Al Qaeda attacks in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq are likely to accelerate. According to a report, terrorist activities in these areas have increased in the last six months of 2020 because the pace of the military operations had slowed down due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Islamic jihadists took advantage of this. In many areas of Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, Islamic State jihadists have begun preparations for major attacks. In addition to this, the jihadist

Islamic organisations did not like the improvement that came about in the relations between Israel and some Arab countries in West Asia due to pressure exerted by the US. As far as Afghanistan is concerned, despite the agreement between the US and the Taliban in February last year, jihadist activities in Afghanistan have increased. Over 600 civilians have been killed in Afghanistan in the last two months. While there are reports of over 2500 security forces personnel getting killed in the last four months. Tahir Hussain, an Afghan policy expert, has expressed doubts that the situation may worsen in Afghanistan in the coming days.

## ‘Hijab’ no more mandatory for School girls in Indonesia



According to **Inquilab** (February 7), the Indonesian government has withdrawn the directive for female students to wear ‘hijab’ scarves across the country. Indonesia's Minister of Education Nadeem Mukarram said that the government grants for schools in the country which insist on girls wearing scarves will be discontinued. He said that what to wear is a matter of personal choice and no school is allowed to put pressure on anyone. The controversy over the wearing of scarves began recently in the country when all Christian students were forced to

wear scarves in Padang, West Sumatra despite opposition from the students. Many girls were expelled from the school because of this. Parents of Christian girls had launched a nationwide social media campaign about this. Human rights organisations across the world had demanded that the Indonesian government ban mandatory scarves for school girls. In view of the pressure being exerted from all over the world, the government announced the withdrawal of this directive.

## Controversy over release of American journalist's killers



According to **Hamara Samaj** (February 2), the Supreme Court of Pakistan has directed the murder accused Ahmed Omar Sheikh and his four associates to be shifted from the death cell in the Karachi Central Prison to a government rest house during the hearing of the murder case of American correspondent Daniel Pearl. It is known that after a special petition by the Federal Government of Pakistan, the court is again reviewing the decision of the Sindh High Court regarding the release of these four accused from jail. A week ago, the Supreme Court of Pakistan endorsed the Sindh High Court's decision to release these terrorists from jail. They have also been given the facility to stay with their families from morning to evening. On this occasion, Attorney General Khalid Javed had argued in the court that Ahmed Omar Sheikh is not a common criminal but he is a terrorist mastermind. Therefore, he poses a grave threat to the people of Pakistan, who have been victims of terrorism for the last two decades. The Attorney General had also emphasised that terrorism is worsening day by day in Pakistan. According to the government, there is a strong case against the culprit. Sheikh's lawyer said that when the case came in front of the Sindh High

Court, the lawyer of the Federal Court of Pakistan was not given the chance to present his side. The High Court cannot snatch away this right from the Federal Court. The government of Sindh had no evidence to detain the accused. On this, Justice Sajjad asked the Attorney General why the Federal Government of Pakistan gave the documents about the detention of Omar Sheikh to the state government. Justice Umar asked whether the accused is a Pakistani national or a foreigner. The Attorney General said that Ahmed Omar Sheikh has citizenship of both Pakistan and Britain. He said that the accused has been in jail for 18 years and in the video of murder that was produced in the court, the face of the accused was not clear.

According to **Inquilab** (January 30), the US had strongly criticised the Pakistan government regarding the decision by the Pakistan Supreme Court to release the accused Omar Sheikh and four other accused from prison and said that the Pakistan government should reconsider the decision of the judiciary as releasing these terrorists from prison will have far-reaching consequences. In January 2002, when American journalist Daniel Pearl was investigating the role of some Pakistani

terrorists in 9/11 attacks, he was abducted by Islamic terrorists from Karachi and after four months his mutilated body was recovered from a settlement in Karachi. The Pakistani government arrested the main terrorist, Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh who is a British citizen along with three of his associates, during the murder investigation. Last year, the Sindh High Court ordered the release of all the accused, which was also approved by the Pakistan Supreme Court last week. Now the Federal Government of Pakistan has requested the Supreme Court to reconsider its decision of releasing the terrorists.

White House spokesperson Jen Psaki has criticised the Pakistan Supreme Court, saying the world was shocked by the way the terrorists abducted and later murdered Daniel Pearl, a reporter for the Wall Street Journal. She said that the US was hurt by this decision of the Pakistan Supreme Court and added that the US demand is that the Government of Pakistan should consider the option of trying the accused in a US court. The US is ready to take legal action against Omar Sheikh. The US government is bound to ensure justice to the family members of the deceased journalist.

**Background:** The decision given by the Pakistan court about this murder which shook the entire world remains the centre of discussion everywhere. Last week, the Supreme Court of Pakistan had approved the Sindh High Court's decision to acquit these killers. Sindh government's public prosecutor Faiz Shah had told the foreign news agency AFP that he had petitioned the Sindh government to review the

judgment of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and requested that the release of accused Omar Sheikh, Faizal Siddiqui and others be revoked. Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh was born in the UK and studied at the London School of Economics. He was arrested soon after the abduction of Daniel Pearl. Later, a court in Karachi directed Daniel Pearl's killer and his accomplices to be released from prison on the grounds that they had spent more than 20 years in custody. The family members of the deceased Daniel Pearl appealed to the Supreme Court of Pakistan against this decision which was quashed by the court and upheld the decision to acquit them. Now, due to the US expressing tremendous resentment against this decision, the Sindh government has filed a review petition in the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Earlier, the Supreme Court had directed that Daniel Pearl's killers be released from jail immediately if they are not involved in any other case. Public Prosecutor Faiz Shah said that three review petitions have been filed in the court insisting that the capital punishment of Omar Sheikh and other associates be upheld. Sindh law minister Murtaza Wahab said that because the review case is sub-judice, the accused are not being released from jail.

Wall Street Journal correspondent Daniel Pearl was abducted while compiling news about Pakistani terrorists in connection with the attack on the World Trade Center in the US. A few weeks later, a video went viral on social media which showed his throat being slashed. ■

## Rise in blasphemy cases in Pakistan

According to **Hindustan Express** (February 8), The Pakistani Institute of Centre for Social Justice recently released a report saying that there is a huge increase in blasphemy cases in Pakistan. It is known

that former military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq had enacted a special law which provided for death penalty for those making any derogatory remarks about Islam, the Prophet, the Quran and the

Prophet's family members. According to government sources, from 1987 to 2020, the blasphemy laws were evoked against nearly 1855 people. It included 1673 men, 84 women and 97 others. A lawsuit was also filed against a company under the blasphemy law in Pakistan. These lawsuits relate to the Prophet and his family members, holy books, religious beliefs of Islam, and disrupting religious ceremonies.

The report also pointed out that the number of complaints filed by Muslims against non-Muslims in cases of insulting religion has come down and now it is the Muslims who are filing cases against Muslims under this law. The law is being misused and the minority community is being targeted. The report also claimed that

due to this law, the distance between various communities in the country is widening. The report also said that most of the victims of this law have been Muslims because the population of Muslims is high in Pakistan. The report in its conclusion said that in most of the cases against Muslims, the cases were resolved during the police investigation. But cases against non-Muslims usually went to the courts and they were punished in most cases. The report also said that among the 200 persons who were prosecuted under this law in 2020, 75 per cent were Muslims, 20 per cent were Ahmadis, 3.5 per cent were Christians and one per cent were Hindus. Among the accused who were Muslims, 70 percent of those prosecuted were Shias.

## Muslim women soldiers allowed to wear hijab in South Africa



According to **Inquilab** (January 30), the government has given permission to Muslim women personnel in the South African army to wear hijab. According to media reports, there has been a change in uniform in the South African army, under which Muslim women personnel can wear scarves to cover their heads. The government has also announced the withdrawal of the on-going trial in the military court against the hijab-wearing Major Fathima Issacs. The trial began three years ago when Major Fathima Issacs was ordered by her superior officers to take off the hijab. She refused to obey the order and

argued that wearing of the hijab is mandatory in Islam. The suit was later withdrawn due to pressure from Muslim organisations. The court had ruled that no one could interfere in the matters of government did not change the army dress code. On this, Major Fathima again filed a petition in the court. After the intervention of the court, the Ministry of Defence of South Africa changed the dress code to ensure that Muslim women personnel who want to don the hijab are allowed to do so while on duty. But they have to keep their ears open.

## Three Arab nations prohibit foreign travellers due to Covid-19



According to **Etemaad** (February 4), in view of the increasing number of Covid-19 patients in Arab countries, three countries have imposed strict restrictions on the entry of outsiders into their territories. The countries include Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait. Two days ago, the Saudi Arabian government banned the entry of citizens of twenty countries, including India, into Saudi Arabia.

According to the daily, **Sahafat** (February 4), Saudi Arabia's citizens, diplomats, doctors and family members have been exempted from this ban. These restrictions have been imposed on the citizens of twenty countries like Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Turkey, Pakistan etc. Apart from these, the countries whose citizens are banned from entering Saudi Arabia include citizens of Britain, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, America, Argentina, Indonesia, Japan and South Africa. So far, 3,68,000 people have tested positive for Covid-19 in Saudi Arabia, while the death toll is 6400. In early January, the number of people affected by the pandemic had fallen

to less than 100, which the numbers are now seeing a rise. In the first week of February, 310 new cases were reported. According to the Government of Pakistan, no Pakistani citizen will be able to travel to Saudi Arabia in the future. But special aircraft have been arranged to bring back the Pakistani nationals who have been trapped in Saudi Arabia.

According to **Qaumi Tanzeem** (February 5), the Saudi government has banned all kinds of celebrations and other activities for up to a month. For the past several months, the number of people affected by Covid-19 had been steadily decreasing but suddenly there has been a huge surge. All ceremonies, marriages and conferences have been banned across the country. All hotels, rest houses and the convention centres will remain closed. More than twenty people will not be able to gather at any place. Movie theatres, stadiums, restaurants and shopping centres have also been closed all over the country. Restaurants and coffee houses will not be able to serve food to anyone in their premises. But they have been allowed to

take orders from outside and supply goods. All the Ministries like Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Tourism etc have been directed to strictly follow these restrictions. Wearing of masks has been made mandatory for those burying bodies at the cemeteries. The offering of prayers in the cemeteries has also been banned.

According to **Etemaad** (February 4), there has also been a sudden spurt in Covid-19 cases in Qatar. The Qatar government has ordered the closure of all offices and malls. It has been made mandatory for all people to wear masks. Currently the mosques have been kept open, but toilets and lavatories will not be allowed to be used. No more than five people will be able to gather at any place. Play grounds and parks have also been closed. No more than three persons will be able to travel in one vehicle. Only one

fourth of the students will be allowed in schools. Only 30 percent people will be allowed in theatres. All indoor swimming pools and water parks have also been closed. The Kuwait government has banned the entry of any foreign national. Foreigners who are currently in Kuwait will have to stay separately and will have to be in quarantine for seven days in hotels. All gyms and salons have been closed for a month. All offices and shopping malls have been closed, along with a ban on the entry of foreign nationals into the UAE.

According to **Hamara Samaj** (February 3), in Abu Dhabi, all hotels, theatres and shopping malls have been ordered to shut down immediately to prevent the spread of corona virus. Along with this all the liquor shops and cinema halls have also been closed. So far, the entry of foreign nationals in Abu Dhabi has not been banned. ■

## USA gives another shock to Saudi Arabia



According to **Inquilab** (February 6), the US has explicitly told Saudi Arabia that it will not support the country with regard to future attacks in Yemen. It is said that this decision of USA was taken in order to favour Iran. US President Joe Biden has said that the time has come to end the war.

It is known that since 2014, while the Yemeni government and the Houthis were caught in a civil war, the Saudi government, along with other Arab countries, became part of the war in order to aid the ousted government of Yemen. Britain and France had also assisted.

America's new president said that there have been a lot of human losses due to the war in Yemen because of which the US has decided to end the war. He said that in future US would not supply any kind of weapons to the Saudi government. And in addition, US will give all kinds of support to the United Nations for restoring peace in the region. The United States will try to provide all possible help to the Yemeni people affected by war. He said that he has indicated to the President of Russia that the US policy towards Russia is set to change. Now there will be no hesitation in taking action against Russia. Every possible step will be taken to protect the interests of the

US and to ensure the security of its people. The security advisor to the US president made it clear that there would be no laxity in the operation that the US has started against Al Qaeda. It is known that in his election campaign, the US President had promised the people that if he is elected to power, then he will ensure that the US withdraws from the war in Yemen. It is also known that more than one lakh people lost their lives in this war which started in 2014 and nearly 50 lakh people have been rendered homeless. There is an urgent need to provide assistance and protection to 240,000 citizens of Yemen. ■

## Protest in Sudan against normalisation of ties with Israel



According to **Inqilab** (February 6), nationwide protests have intensified against the Sudan government's recognition of Israel. The protesters have demanded the severing of ties with Israel. The protesting mob tried to attack the Israeli embassy in Khartoum and set Israeli flags on fire. The mob is also protesting against Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok's government and has been demanding that the government resign immediately. According to government sources, the army has been instructed to rein in the protesters.

According to the information centres of Palestine, demonstrations were also held in front of the US embassy in Khartoum and a copy of the Abraham Accords that was concluded by the US was burnt. Anti-government protests have also been organized by students and farmers in many parts of Sudan. The protesters have accused the government of betraying Islam by compromising with Israel and succumbing to American blackmailing.

Sudan signed an agreement with Israel on January 6, 2019 under pressure

from the US. Prior to the signing of the deal, the US removed Sudan from the list of countries supporting terrorist organisations. The US has been running a special campaign for the past one year to improve Israel's relations with Arab countries, under which six Muslim countries have established diplomatic relations with Israel so far. Recently,

Bahrain and Morocco have also announced the establishing of ties with Israel. In Sudan, Parliament is dissolved at present and administration is in the hands of the Military Council. The Military Council has announced recognition of Israel's relations with Sudan. Parliament is expected to approve this at a later date. ■

## Israeli Prime Minister visits United Arab Emirates

According to **Inquilab** (February 4), Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will soon visit the United Arab Emirates. He announced this at a press conference. These days, Israel is battling



with the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The administrative system of the country has almost come to a standstill. The number of people affected by corona virus in Israel is increasing day by day. The

Israeli Prime Minister has twice cancelled visits to the United Arab Emirates due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Prime Minister has announced that his proposed visit will be very short. He will go there in a special

aircraft and try to return within a few hours. He said that before he had intended to stay there for a week. Israeli government sources have indicated that Netanyahu may also visit Bahrain. ■

## Establishment of Interim Government in Libya

According to **Inquilab** (February 7), various Libyan parties have decided to form an all-party interim government until the next elections in the country. The transitional Prime Minister of this government will be Abdul Hamid Mohammed. Former Ambassador Mohamed al-Menfi has been elected the President of the National Council. In Libya, the general elections are scheduled to be held on 24 December. Talks were on to form an interim government between various political parties of the country and with this goal, the Libyan Political Dialogue was established with 74 delegates after talks were held in Geneva for the last few weeks.

After the 2011 assassination of former dictator Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, there is a continued struggle between various political parties and armed groups to gain power. The situation in Libya is deteriorating rapidly due to this civil war. A spokesman for the UN Support Mission in Libya has expressed hope that the situation in Libya will improve after the establishment of the interim government. In the North African Muslim country of Libya, there was an attempt by the United Nations to establish a government under the leadership of Al Siraj, but this was opposed by the Libyan National Army of Sardar Khalifa Khizr, the commander in the western region of Libya. Civil war





erupted in the country, due to which the United Nations had summoned representatives of various parties to Geneva to establish peace and conduct elections in Libya. Acting Prime Minister Mohammad Hamid has said that he would like to establish peace in the country and special attention will be given to the reorganisation of the army. A special ministry will also be set up to address national problems. He said that he will try to conduct general elections in the country with the help of the United Nations. A United Nations spokesperson said that the Acting Prime Minister will set up his cabinet in the next one month. Germany, the United States, France, Italy and Britain have welcomed the efforts to establish peace in Libya, a victim of civil war.

The daily **Inquilab** (February 8), in its editorial, has welcomed the agreement reached between various factions fighting in Libya due the efforts of the United Nations and said that the situation there is so bad that there is little hope for early restoration of peace. But it may be possible that better sense will prevail and Muslims stop killing their own brothers. It is known that in 2011, the wave called the Arab Spring, which came to the Arab nations as a result of the CIA's 'kindness', has destroyed Libya. The affluent countries of NATO and some of their Arab allies turned a thriving country into a big slaughter house and the whole country was

devastated. Today, if one sees the condition of Libya, it is difficult to believe that it is the same country which Muammar Gaddafi had turned into a powerful nation. But Gaddafi's enmity with the US, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates proved very expensive as these countries disguised their hostility under the garb of Arab Spring and removed Gaddafi out of their way.

Gaddafi ruled Libya for 42 years. Earlier, he was a military officer who, along with his allies, overthrew the government of Emperor Idris I of Libya in September 1969. Gaddafi then rebuilt Libya and used the money from the country's rich oil resources in innovation and in ensuring the well-being of the people. This caused the country's currency to become so strong that a Libyan dinar was worth three American dollars. Thousands of people from India used to go to Libya for employment. But to remove Gaddafi, the US, along with its allies, broke Libya brick by brick. It is the misfortune of the Muslims that the countries that should have stood for *Darul Iman* (fortress of peace) are turned into *Darul Harb* (centre of war). Due to the Libyan civil war, millions of people had to flee from there and take refuge in other countries. Thousands of Libyan civilians were killed in this war. It remains to be seen what new turn Libya will take in the light of the on-going events.

## Yogi government takes action against madrasas



According to **Mumbai Urdu News** (February 8), the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Uttar Pradesh government has decided to launch an investigation into more than 400 Islamic madrasas in Mirzapur and Azamgarh. It is said that these madrasas are fake and they have been taking grants worth crores of rupees from the central government. Apart from this, many of these madrasas are also accused of being run illegally. There has also been a huge scam in the recruitment of teachers in many of the madrasas. There has been a complaint that the places where many of these madrasas are claimed to be run by the managers have no existence and the information given to the government in the context of students and teachers are also fake. Now the special team of SIT will investigate these allegations. Of the 400 Islamic madrasas that are being

investigated, 250 of them are located in Azamgarh district.

According to the information provided in an RTI reply, the special investigation team will go to the spot and investigate about these madrasas. Recently, during the investigation conducted by the government, several scams and misuse of government funds came to light in many of the madrasas. The state government has also decided that the whereabouts of students and teachers of these madrasas will be investigated by local police stations. This investigation will also involve examining the certificates of the teachers. Recently, during an investigation in Mirzapur district, it was revealed that 14 madrasas were being run illegally. They neither had any buildings nor any students. Despite this, they were receiving crores of rupees from the Central Government and the State Government. ■

## State-wide campaign for the spread of Islam by Imarat Shariah

According to **Avadhnama** (February 2), a special campaign is being carried out for the preservation of Urdu in the states of

Bihar, Orissa and Jharkhand on the instructions of Islamic Personal Law Board member and Muslim thinker Maulana Syed

Mohammad Wali Rahmani, Ameer-e Shariat. This campaign started in Bihar. Maulana Mohammed Shibli Al Qasmi, while addressing a press conference in Phulwari Sharif, said that a sense of detachment with religion is rising among Muslims. At the same time, the ruling government in the country wants to forcibly impose a particular religion and its beliefs on the whole nation. In order to face this crisis and to protect the new generations of Muslims from the oppression of Islam and to bring awareness of Islamic practices and religion in them, it is necessary to develop a mechanism in this area, under which all children should be compulsorily sensitised and educated about their religion. This is possible only when there is a network of Islamic madrasas serving this purpose. Therefore, Imarat Shariah has decided that a network of Islamic madrasas should be developed in these three states where Muslims live so

that new generations of Muslims can get moral training in an Islamic environment. He added that it is their endeavour to establish schools, colleges and technical institutions for Muslims.

He said that it is necessary for the sake of Islamic civilisation to ensure that special attention is paid to the education of Urdu language so that Islam will be protected. Therefore, a special campaign has been launched in these three states for the conservation of Urdu. He said that it will be the organisation's endeavour to create an atmosphere for reading and speaking Urdu in every Muslim household so that Muslims can buy a large number of Urdu newspapers and books. He appealed to the journalists to promote this campaign in their newspapers so that they succeed in their goal. He said that a lot of literature is also being published by Imarat Shariah for the preservation of Urdu language and Islam.

## Dispute over ban on Namaz in mosque

According to **Inqilab** (January 23), there is a complete ban on the admission for those wanting to offer Namaz in the historic mosque of Feroz Shah Kotla. Entry is allowed in the mosque only for Friday prayers. If someone wants to offer Namaz there, then he has to take an online ticket which is priced at Rs 20. In the same way, if a person goes there thrice to offer Namaz, then he will have to pay Rs 60. The Imam and Muezzin are allowed to go there, but for that they require a letter from the Waqf Board. Hundreds of pilgrims come to this historic place on Thursdays, but they are also not admitted without tickets. Apart from this, there is also a ban on distributing *Tabarruk* (Prasad). It is known that Timur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty, offered Namaz in this mosque during the attack on Delhi. Before this, he had sanctioned the massacre in Delhi. Like all other historical

buildings of Delhi, earlier, all persons were allowed entry into Feroz Shah Kotla and tickets were not collected from them. Jamal Akhtar, a member of the Delhi Waqf Board, said that he would take up the matter at the meeting of the Waqf Board. He said that according to the law, no person can stop a person from offering Namaz. If anyone resorts to such a measure, it is illegal.

According to **Roznama Sahara** (January 30), the Shahi Imam of Fatheपुरi Masjid, Dr Mufti Muhammad Mukarram Ahmed has demanded that the government immediately lift the ban on the offering of Namaz as the prohibition of entry to those wanting to offer Namaz in mosques is against the Indian Constitution. He condemned the fact that many mosques in India have been occupied by the Archaeological Department and they have

banned the offering of Namaz in them. He has demanded the Ministry of Minorities and the Central Minorities Commission to immediately lift the ban on the offering of Namaz in historic buildings.

According to another news published in **Roznama Sahara** (January 27), entry into this historic building without a ticket of Rs 20 is not allowed. Namaz can be offered in the mosque for only one hour on the day of *Jummah*. Earlier there was no restriction on the offering of Namaz in this mosque and people could offer namaz without taking tickets. There is news that some organisations of Muslims in Delhi are preparing to agitate on this matter.

**Background:** Controversy has been going on for the last several decades about allowing worship in historical sites of the country. According to the rules of the Department of Archaeology, in most of the historical sites which are under its control, offering of Namaz is not allowed. This restriction also applies to many churches and temples. It is said that according to the Act, at the time when the Archaeological Department takes over buildings, if the religious activities were going on in these places of worship, then they were

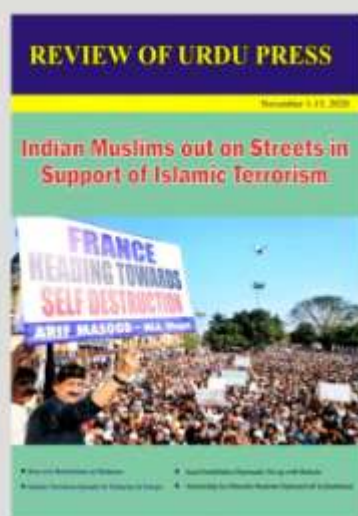
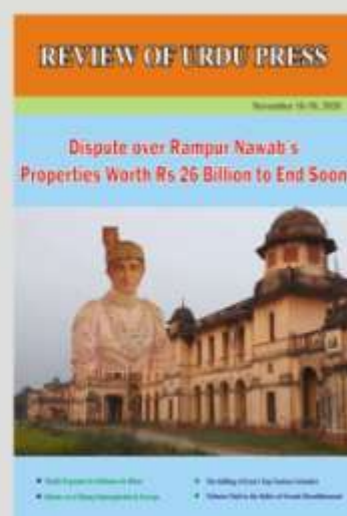
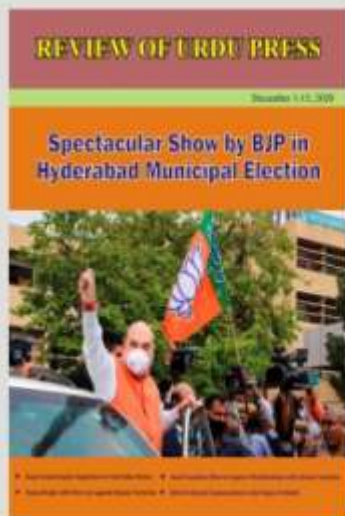
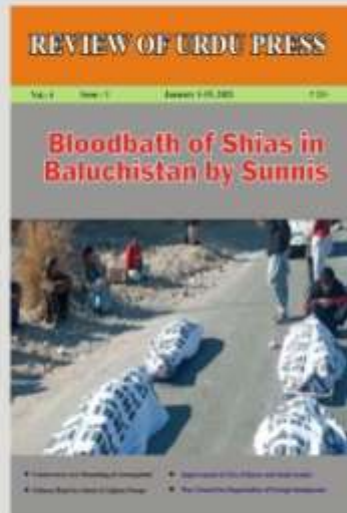
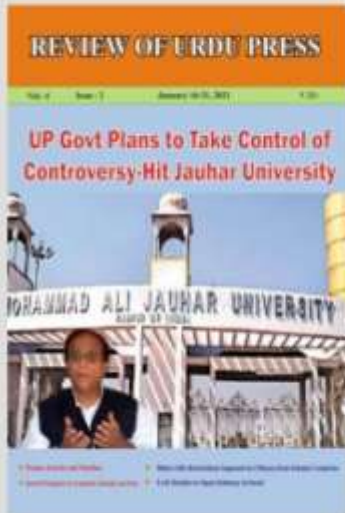
continued in accordance with the provisions of the law. If there was no worship conducted at the time of takeover of the building, then worship is prohibited. According to the statement given in Parliament in 1989, worship in 360 ancient temples, mosques, churches and dargahs located in different parts of the country is prohibited in line with the provisions of the Act. During the reign of VP Singh, this matter had come up in Parliament many times and Muslim institutions in the capital had also done agitations several times to get the requisite permission for offering Namaz. After this, the Central Government had given permission to offer Namaz for one hour on Fridays in the religious places protected by the Department of Archaeology. Later this permission was also extended to some other historical monuments including the mosque at Agra's Taj Mahal. As far as Delhi is concerned, there are 42 ancient places of worship in which the prohibition of offering Namaz has been in place for 80 years. Earlier, tourists were allowed to enter without buying tickets, but in the last few years, it has been made mandatory to buy tickets at most of these places. ■

## World Urdu Award in the name of Urdu litterateur

According to **Hindustan Express** (February 4), the organisation 'Almi Tehreek-e-Urdu', named after the Urdu litterateur Muzaffar Hanfi, has announced an award which will be given in the month of April. In this regard, the president of this organisation Dr Zakir Malik has made an official announcement. He said that a meeting of this organisation was held in Delhi in which it was decided to commence this award. Under this award, in addition to the amount of Rs 35,000, a certificate and trophy will also be given to any Urdu litterateur. The writer will be selected by a five-member committee of Urdu writers, poets and critics from across the world.

This committee will announce its recommendations by 15 April. It has also been decided in this meeting that this award will be started in the name of the famous Urdu litterateur Muzaffar Hanfi, who passed away in October last year. He was born in Khandwa (Madhya Pradesh) in 1936. His real name was Abu Zafar and he earned BA and PhD degrees in Urdu from Aligarh University. He has also written more than 100 books. Since 1976, he was the Head of the Urdu department at Jamia Millia Islamia. In 1989, he was appointed as the professor of Iqbal Chair at Kolkata University. He retired in 2001. ■

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