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38 Accused in Ahmedabad Bomb Blast get Death Sentence



- Growing controversy over hijab
- USA claims to have killed ISIS chief
- France rallies against Islam
- Row over dargah's precious land in Supreme Court

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Summary

The judgment in the serial bomb blasts case that took place in Ahmedabad nearly 14 years ago has finally been delivered in which 38 accused have been awarded death sentence while 11 others have been awarded life-term. The strange thing is that Muslim organisations and Muslim newspapers have started criticising the judgment and alleged that the verdict of the court was unexpected and strong. Jamiat Ulema has been making efforts to save the terrorists from the clutches of the law right from the beginning. This organisation has lined up a battery of country's most expensive lawyers and so far more than 500 terrorists have thus been saved from the clutches of the law by taking advantage of the legal loopholes. The interesting thing is that this Muslim organisation has been extending monetary help to the families of terrorists caught by the law.

Muslim organisations and newspapers have started an organised campaign to give a nationwide pattern to the controversy that has erupted over the hijab ban in schools in Karnataka. The surprising thing is that Islamic nations and countries like the US have come out in open support of them. However, there is already a ban on hijab and burqa in 21 countries in the world including Muslim nations like Turkey and over a dozen European countries. So far, neither the USA nor any Muslim nation has mustered the courage to open their mouth against them. The statement of the India's external affairs ministry that no foreign government has any right to interfere in the internal affairs of the country is totally logical and based on norms.

In West Asia, the tension between Iran and Israel has been growing on a daily basis. The efforts made by Western nations to stop the nuclear development programme of Iran have failed. Recently, the test-firing of a ballistic missile named Khyber Shikan, developed by Iranian scientists, took place in Tehran and it is said to have a range of 1,500 kilometres. Following the test-firing of this missile, Israel's defence minister expressed concern over the development and said that Iran is preparing to launch a war against his country.

Iran-supported Houthi rebels have started an indirect war against a united front formed against Iran by the US with the cooperation of Arab nations like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and UAE. Till recently, Houthis had targeted only Saudi Arabia. Now they have started targeting UAE and Bahrain as well using drones and missiles.

The US has claimed that it has eliminated the chief of Islamic terrorist organisation ISIS, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi. Simultaneously, the Iraq government has stepped up its campaign against those linked to ISIS at the behest of the US.

In Europe, Islamic terrorism is spreading its tentacles rapidly. Since France has the largest population of Muslims, it has become the biggest target of Islamic radicalism. Due to this the French President has taken several stringent legal steps to curb the activities of Islamic jihadi organisations. France has imposed a ban on Muslim migrants from entering the country. The interior ministry of France has also formed a new body to free Islam from terrorism and give it a secular identity.

Thirty eight accused in Ahmedabad bomb blasts get death sentence



Inquilab (February 19) states that for the first time in the history of the country, a special court has awarded death sentence to 38 persons and life-term to 11 others in the Ahmedabad serial bomb blasts case. According to the newspaper, a team of lawyers appointed by Jamiat Ulema has been arguing the case before the special court for the past several days. They were confident that the court would acquit all the accused and even if they were found guilty, they would be released soon as they have already spent long years in jail. However, the court, contrary to their expectations, handed over death sentence to 38 accused in its verdict. The court awarded them capital punishment under Section 302 of Indian Penal Code and under Prevention of Terrorism Act and while awarding life-term to 11 others, said they should remain in jail till the end of their life. Out of the 78 accused, the police have turned one into an approver. The police claimed that the accused were linked to terror organisation Indian Mujahideen. It has been alleged that they planned this conspiracy as a revenge for the Godhra riots that took place in 2002. The serial blasts took place on July

26, 2008 in Ahmedabad in which 56 people were killed.

Commenting on the verdict of the court, chief of Jamiat Ulema, Maulana Arshad Madani, said that the decision of the court is unbelievable. We will not leave any stone unturned to get the accused justice from the higher courts and will knock at the doors of the high court to Supreme Court. Jamiat Ulema will get them the services of the best lawyers in the country to save them from being hanged. He said that there is no need to get disappointed on this judgment. There were many cases where the lower courts had given punishment and the higher courts had clearly acquitted them of charges. In this connection, he has given the example of the attack on Akshardham in which the lower court had given death sentence to three persons including Mufti Abdul Qayoom and life-term to four others. The Gujarat high court had approved this verdict. However, the Supreme Court acquitted all the accused in the case. He said they would not let even a single accused to be hanged.

Commenting on the verdict, **Roznama Sahara** (February 19) in its



organised riots against Muslims. There is no doubt that terrorism in all forms is condemnable. In the Ahmedabad bomb blast episode, even the harshest punishment is not enough. Though the court has delivered its verdict too late in the case, it is still a historic judgment against terrorism.

editorial said that it is the first time in the history of the country that so many accused have been awarded death sentence. The court has also directed a compensation of Rs 1 lakh each to the next of the kin of those killed, Rs 50,000 to seriously injured and Rs 25,000 each to those who suffered minor injuries in the blasts. The newspaper says that efforts are being made to turn minorities into second class citizens in Hindustan. Hence the community feels itself unsafe in the country. Even in the case of the well-planned anti-Muslim riots that took place in Gujarat in 2002, the entire world knows that it was orchestrated under the protection of the government. It is natural to develop a sense of hatred and vendetta against the rioters behind the

Mumbai Urdu News (February 19) in its editorial has shed some light into the background of blasts case and said the police stand in such cases tend to be partial. Recently, the Supreme Court had directed the Yogi government to withdraw all the recovery notices issued to the protesters of Citizenship Amendment Act and also return the fine extracted from them. The newspaper expressed happiness that Jamiat Ulema will be approaching every court to get justice for the accused in the case. The newspaper said that reforms should be immediately brought in police and judiciary so that they would be able to perform their duty in a fair manner without appealing the government or regardless of its resentment. ■

Growing controversy over hijab

The controversy that has erupted in a college in Karnataka's small town Udupi two months ago over the ban imposed on wearing hijab inside classroom has now become a nationwide issue. The matter has now reached the Supreme Court. The strange thing is that some countries are trying to raise the issue at international level.

Inquilab (February 13) states that even the US expressed concern over the restriction and made the Karnataka government its target of criticism. The US government's Ambassador for Religious Freedom, Rashad Hussain, said the ban imposed on hijab in schools and colleges in Karnataka is a violation of religious freedom. He said that religious freedom

includes the full freedom for people to wear their religious dress and there is an open violation of this in Karnataka. The aim of the ban imposed on hijab in schools is to violate the religious freedom, give a bad name to women and girls and to marginalise them.

It is to be noted that that Rashad Hussain is the chief advisor of US Secretary of State on religious freedom. Earlier, the foreign ministry of Pakistan had summoned the Indian Ambassador and brought his attention to the ban on hijab in Karnataka and described it as a violation of religious freedom.

Inquilab (February 16) states that the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) has strongly condemned the ban



imposed on hijab and targeted the Indian government over the provocative speeches made at Dharma Sansad. It is to be noted that 57 Muslim nations in the world are members of this organisation and its headquarters is in Jeddah. In a statement, the organisation expressed concern over the ill-treatment to Muslims in India and demanded the United Nations and organisations across the world to immediately intervene on the issue. The organisation, while condemning the campaign against Muslims, harassment of Muslim women on social media and the ban imposed on hijab, demanded that stringent action be taken against the accused.

Commenting on the demand, Union minister for minority affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said that no foreign power has any right to interfere in the internal affairs of our country. In India, followers of all religions are staying together happily and nobody has any right to give any advice to India. A spokesperson of India's external affairs ministry said that nobody has any right to interfere in the internal matters of the country in this manner and we strongly condemn this.

As far as Urdu newspapers are concerned, they have unleashed a well-orchestrated campaign to make it a national issue. There is not a single Urdu newspaper which has not prominently published the news related to the protests of Muslim women over hijab every day. Almost every newspaper has been regularly writing

editorials describing the ban as against the Constitution of the country. May be the aim of these newspapers is to give a political colour to the issue and polarise Muslim voters in the five states where Assembly elections are being held. The male and female students of Aligarh Muslim University, Jamia Milia Islamia and other Muslim institutions too have jumped into this controversy. Different Muslim newspapers have described it as a campaign to end the distinct

identity of Islam. The interesting thing is that almost every Muslim organisation has also jumped into this controversy. The student wing of the controversial organisation Popular Front of India, Campus Front of India, has organised separate protests in states like Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Assam and Kerala. In this connection, a series of news reports were published in Urdu media. The Muslim Personal Law Board, while describing the ban on hijab as interference in the religious affairs of Islam, said the government is trying to get rid of the constitutional rights guaranteed to Muslims in the Constitution and a nationwide campaign would be unleashed against it. Those who echoed this view include Ittehadul Muslimeen, Jamiat Ulema, Muslim Majlis Mushawarat, Shia Council, Darul Uloom Deoband, Jamaat-e-Islami and Qasim Rasool Ilyas of Welfare Party of India.

Akhbar-e-Mashriq (February 13) states that Chief Minister of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee too, while condemning the ban, described it as an open violation of the Constitution of the country. Muslim organisations have filed petitions in different courts in the country against the ban which are still being heard.

Mumbai Urdu News (February 12) reports that protests in support of hijab have gone up across the country. The Islamic world is also openly condemning the ban.

Mumbai Urdu News in its editorial on February 12 alleged that the BJP is raising this issue in order to polarise voters during the Assembly elections in five states. The newspaper praised Muslim student Muskan for raising the slogan 'Allahu Akbar' instead of getting scared of the slogan 'Jai Shri Ram' and said that the Jamiat Ulema has taken the right step in rewarding her with Rs 5 lakh.

Hamara Samaj in its editorial on February 13 had said that the BJP is raising this issue because it is clearly sensing its defeat in Uttar Pradesh. Hence it is trying to polarise Hindu votes on the pretext of it. Surprisingly, despite being a Muslim, the Governor of Kerala is supporting the ban.

Etemaad (February 16) reports that the educational institutions in Himachal Pradesh have also imposed a ban on hijab and the Chief Minister of Himachal, while announcing a dress code for girl and boy students, appealed to them not to give any religious colour to the issue.

Mumbai Urdu News (February 15) in its editorial has expressed surprise that the Karnataka High Court is stretching the issue and it has refused to issue a stay order on the ban.

Salar (February 5) reports that students wearing hijab were not allowed to enter colleges in more than a dozen places in Karnataka.

Salar (February 7) states that the Campus Front of India had alleged that due to the pressure exerted by Hindutvavadi

government, the management board of different colleges imposed a ban on hijab and are depriving Muslim girl students of their Constitutional rights.

Salar (February 6) reports that the former education minister of Karnataka Tanveer Sait has sent a letter to the Chief Minister of Karnataka and demanded that he immediately intervene in the hijab issue. He said that the government has imposed this ban at the behest of RSS.

Siasat (February 12) reports that the general secretary of All India Muslim Personal Law Board Maulana Khalid Saifullah Rahmani has announced in Hyderabad that his organisation would question the ban on hijab in the Supreme Court.

Akhbar-e-Mashriq (February 7) reports that while criticising the ban imposed on hijab, Rahul Gandhi described it as a violation of the rights guaranteed to the minorities under the Constitution of the country.

Siasat (February 10) stated that the Home Minister of Telangana, Mohammad Mahmood Ali, has said that the ban imposed on hijab in Karnataka and in other BJP-ruled states is against the Constitution and demanded its withdrawal.

Avadhnama (February 8) reports that the general secretary of Majlis Ulema-e-Hind, Maulana Syed Kalbe Jawad Naqvi, has described the ban on hijab as undemocratic and demanded the government to withdraw its decision.

Reaction to the statement of RSS chief on Dharma Sansads

On the pretext of the Dharma Sansads being held in different parts of the country, Urdu newspapers are running propaganda against Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the other organisations linked to it for the past two months. Now the Sarsanghchalak of RSS Dr Mohan Bhagwat has given his opinion on the issue.

Inquilab (February 10) in its editorial, while mentioning about the

clarification given by Dr Mohan Bhagwat, said that it is not at all new for the Sangh to give such kind of statement. Disowning responsibility is an old tradition of Sangh. Now, if they do not support such provocative actions, then they should give answers to two-three questions. The first question is why the clarification came so late on the dangerous statements issued at the Dharma Sansad? The second question

is if the Sangh does not agree with those statements, why it did not condemn them in a clear voice? Trying to incite somebody for murder is not a minor incident which could be ignored. This issue is not limited to the country. Its repercussions have reached even other countries. Even foreign media also have taken note of it. Then what was the reason for the RSS to keep mum on it? Thirdly, why the RSS did not rein in the leaders who made similar statements in the past?



Had the RSS taken note of such statements right from the beginning, then they would not have dared to act like this. What we understand is that disowning responsibility is an old habit of RSS. It has disowned its link with Nathuram Godse, the assassin of Gandhiji. However, the fact is just the opposite of it. One would get 50 such examples of disowning the responsibility. In the commission of inquiries constituted by the government to investigate communal riots that took place in the country, the name of RSS and its cadre had been mentioned. But the RSS has never accepted that it had any links with the people involved in such riots. In the past also, the leaders of allied organisations of Sangh had given hundreds of hateful speeches and statements. But no effort was ever made to discourage them. If Mohan Bhagwat's claim that any person associated with Hindutva will not agree with such statements, then why the Sangh kept quiet when such speeches were made in the past? Even the leaders of BJP are silent on this issue. When such statements were made in front of some BJP leaders they did not even take note of it. Now the RSS can't say that it has nothing to do with the BJP.

Mumbai Urdu News in its editorial on February 12, while welcoming the speech of Mohan Bhagwat, said that the RSS chief has distanced himself from the disgusting speeches made against a particular community in Haridwar and other places and said that Hindutva doesn't teach us to hate other religions. However,

Mohan Bhagwat remained content until voices came from foreign countries, especially from England and America, against these negative speeches. Demands came from there to impose ban on those who organised Dharma Sansad. The RSS has its influence in Western nations and donations worth crores of dollars come to the organisation from those countries. The RSS had to distance itself from these hateful speeches. Hence Mohan Bhagwat had to issue this clarification. However, it is well-known throughout the world that those who fuel religious hatred in India are all linked to RSS.

The newspaper stated that elections are being held in five states including Uttarakhand. Till now, the Uttarakhand police have been unable to arrest anyone. The two persons who were arrested were in fact taken into custody only after the issue reached Supreme Court. One cannot expect the Delhi Police, which comes under the Union home ministry, to issue any order to arrest these saffron-clads. However, the Indian government got a bad name when the matter was reported by newspapers and TV channels across the world. Despite all this, the Central government lawyer in the Supreme Court tried to save the people who made the hateful speech. The matter, however, did not become a poll issue. Hence the Sarsanghchalak of RSS had to come out in the open and clarify that Hindutva has nothing to do with such speeches. His statement was meant more for the Hindus who stay abroad and face

the consequences there due to such speeches and come under pressure of Pakistani lobby who gets an opportunity to score brownie points over Indians.

India is the world's largest democracy and people of this country draw their strength from the ahimsa of Gandhiji. However, RSS and some BJP-supported organisations are involved in dividing the country for a few votes. Those who participated in the Dharma Sansad in Haridwar should have been arrested immediately but that did not happen. Hence Mohan Bhagwat issued a statement as usual and tried to save his face.

Roznama Sahara (February 11) has published an article written by its Group Editor Abdul Majid Nizami titled "Meaning of Mohan Bhagwat's statement." It has been stated in the article that if Mohan Bhagwat's statement is accepted, then according to him, those who spit venom against Muslims cannot be termed Hindus in the true sense. Mohan Bhagwat's words are on these lines: "The speeches made at Dharma Sansad are not like that of a Hindu's words, actions, heart or mind. Now if I say something in anger, it cannot be termed Hindutva. Those who follow RSS and Hindutva do not believe in such hateful comments."

If one carefully listens to the speech of Mohan Bhagwat, and try to draw some conclusions on it, then it becomes clear that the Sarsanghchalak did not say anything clearly to make out whether he is

expressing his displeasure at the organisers of the Hindu Dharma Sansad held in Haridwar in December 2021 or opposing the anti-Muslim campaign. His speech gives only some indications. It is evident that those who listen to his speech need to interpret it as per their worldview. It is not necessary that a person who has got his training at RSS shakha would interpret it in the same way an ordinary Hindustani interprets it in the light of his understanding of Indian Constitution. In such a situation, it is natural to have such differences. From his speech, it could be assumed that the aim of Mohan Bhagwat is not to restrain anti-Muslim speeches or to restore the communal harmony in the country, but to restore the stained image of RSS among world media due to the provocative statements issued by some Hindu religious leaders in support of violence.

Till now, even the big leaders of BJP are silent on the issue. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have not condemned the incident. Neither any legal step was taken against the alleged accused before the intervention of the Supreme Court. From this entire episode, the picture that is coming clear to us is that all the organisations involved in violence against Muslim minorities have the ideological support of RSS and they even get legal protection from the BJP. Hence one doesn't see any end to their provocative actions soon.

Attack on Asaduddin Owaisi

Majority of Urdu newspapers did not give too much importance to the attack that took place on the chief of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen, Asaduddin Owaisi, in Uttar Pradesh and neither did Muslims in other states except Telangana react to it in any special manner.

Inquilab (February 4) states that when the chief of the Majlis Ittehadul Muslimeen, Asaduddin Owaisi, was returning to Delhi from Uttar Pradesh after

completing his election programmes, three or four shots were fired at his vehicle. Owaisi himself tweeted about the incident and informed others. In his tweet, Owaisi said that his vehicle was fired upon at Chhijarsi toll gate a few minutes ago. Three to four persons took part in the attack. All of them fled after abandoning their weapons on the spot. My vehicle got punctured. But I sat in another vehicle and left the spot. We are all safe due to the



grace of Allah, he tweeted. The police have arrested two accused in the case. According to Senior Superintendent of Police, Hapur, a resident of Noida named Sachin and his colleagues had fired at Owaisi's vehicle. They have been taken into custody. A 9mm pistol has been seized from them. The second accused, Shubham, had surrendered in a police station in Ghaziabad. Owaisi said that it is the responsibility of Modi government and the state government that they conduct a fair inquiry into the incident.

Salar (February 4) reports that the Additional Director General of Police (law and order) of Uttar Pradesh, Prashant Kumar, said that the police have got important evidence in this connection.

Mumbai Urdu News (February 6) states that while addressing an election rally in Baghpat, Owaisi said that those who fired upon him are those people who shot dead Gandhiji. Targeting Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, he said that Yogi baba speaks lot of lies like his master Modi. I always talk eye to eye with BJP and hence I was fired upon. If one Owaisi is killed, lakhs of new Owaisis will take birth.

Inquilab (February 5) reports that while delivering an emotional speech in Lok Sabha, Owaisi has rejected the offer of Z category security offered by the

government. He said that he can't lead a suffocated life. If death has to come, let it come. He demanded that the government impose UAPA on those who were caught. He said that he saw death at a distance of 6 feet. Now if I don't talk about my problems in Parliament where else would I say it. I don't want Z category security but I want to be an A category citizen. As per another news published in the same newspaper, the two assailants who were caught were sent on a 15-day judicial remand in jail. Uttar Pradesh Additional Director General of Police Prashant Kumar has claimed that the accused told the police during interrogation that they were hurt by the statements given by Owaisi against a particular religion. Hence they opened fire at him.

Etemaad (February 5) reports that a hartal was observed in Hyderabad and in several towns of Telangana and people condemned the attack on him. Following the attack, Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla telephoned Owaisi and enquired about him. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, while condemning the attack on Owaisi, said that those who deliver speeches should take care that their speeches do not offend anyone. In a democracy we believe in ballots and not in bullets. We can keep our ideological differences but my government will not allow anyone to take law into his hands.



In **Hindustan Express** (February 7), Zafar Agha in an article said that Owaisi Saheb remained in spotlight after this incident. But whatever it is, the media glare on Owaisi takes place either during election time or when the BJP needs to focus on some Muslim leader. It is mentioned in the article that the opponents of Owaisi often raise this allegation that Owaisi's party is a B team of BJP and the Godi media focuses on Owaisi when the BJP wants to use him to provoke Hindus against Muslims or when his speeches are used to divide the votes of Muslims. Its direct benefit goes to the BJP. The way it happened in the Assembly elections in Bihar last time. However, it is possible only if Owaisi remains in the limelight. For this, media just needed a news. This news was provided by a Hindu youth who opened fire at the car of Owaisi and both Owaisi and BJP have got their work done. One doesn't know what the reality is. It is not difficult to understand who is helping whom. However, it looks like that Owaisi Saheb will remain in news like this from time to time during the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections.

Mumbai Urdu News (February 6) has published an article written by Masoom Moradabadi titled, "Who is the real culprit in the murderous attack on Owaisi?" The writer says that this much is clear from the cowardly attack on Owaisi that the law and order machinery in Uttar Pradesh is completely broken down and even during election time they are involved only in protecting the interests of the ruling party. Interestingly, this is not the first time that extremist Hindus have targeted Owaisi. Earlier, extremist Hindu organisations had

attacked his residence in Delhi. Everybody knows that Owaisi has fielded his candidates in more than 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh and he has been running the election campaign for them. He has huge following among Muslims and he is quite popular among Muslim youths. This has caused a worry among people who consider themselves as the sole custodian of Muslim votes till now.

Mumbai Urdu News has given the title for its editorial on February 6 as "Owaisi did not cry like a coward in Parliament." Shakeel Rashid in his special editorial said he may have differences with Owaisi on his political methods but those who opened fire at Owaisi are enemies of democracy and Constitution. They want to impose the law of Manu in this country. They want to make minorities lower class citizens. These are those people who raise the slogan to make this country a Hindu Rashtra. It is a crime to raise such a slogan and it is a bigger crime to unleash a hate campaign in order to implement it and open fire on somebody with the purpose of killing him. The hands of saffron gangs are behind these crimes. These are those people who are not scared of getting arrested. Now just see this. Those who were arrested for opening fire at Owaisi are not booked under UAPA. Whereas UAPA was immediately imposed on an innocent journalist like Siddique Kappan and on people like Umar Khalid soon after their arrest. Sachin and Shubham got influenced due to the venomous talks at the Dharma Sansad and hence they fired at Owaisi. However, Dharma Sansad is still taking place and no action has been taken against them. There is no need for me to comment whether Owaisi is an agent of BJP or not. Now it has become clear that those who fired at him hate him so much. This attack was a planned one. It is good that Owaisi has refused to accept Z category security and he did not weep like Yogi Adityanath in Parliament. Crying is the job of the cowards and fraudsters.

Row over the annual budget of minority affairs ministry



Hamara Samaj (February 2) reports that in the annual budget presented in the Parliament, there is an increase of 13% in the allocation for the welfare of backward castes and tribals and an 11% increase in the allocation for social justice and welfare. However, there is only 4% increase in the budget for the welfare of minorities. Interestingly, the backwardness of all these three classes is almost same. The Union minister for minority affairs, after manipulating the data, claimed that compared to last year there is an increase of Rs 674 crore in the budget for minority affairs ministry. In the budget, there is a huge decrease in the prescribed funds for Maulana Azad Education Foundation and other minority welfare institutions. The previous year's budget for minority affairs ministry was Rs 4,810 crore which was Rs 219 crore less compared to the budget of 2020-21. Last year's budget for Maulana Azad Education Foundation was Rs 90 crore. However, this year, they have been given just one lakh rupees. Does the government want to shut down this foundation? The modernisation fund for madrasas was Rs 164 crore last year and it has been reduced to Rs 160 crore. For studies till Metric, a provision of just Rs 58 lakh has been made though the promise was of Rs one crore.

Former minister for minority affairs K Rahman Khan said that due to inflation, there

should be a 10% increase in the budget for this ministry and the budget should be of 8,000 crore. The inflation is shooting up like anything. But there is a huge reduction in the budget allocation. The Modi government's budget for minorities is less than Rs 5,000 crore. According to Javed Alam, an expert with the organisation Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, as far as the question of uplift of backward classes is concerned, the budget for minorities is similar to the salt in *daal*. There is a huge cut in the allocation for overall development and women empowerment. The percentage of allocation for minorities in the Central budget is 0.14%, whereas the population of minorities is 21% of the total population. He described this budget as dissatisfactory and from this it is clear that the Modi government is giving step motherly treatment to minorities.

As far as the budget for minorities is concerned, its allocation is as follows:

In 2010-11, it was Rs 2,600 crore; in 2011-12 it was Rs 2,800 crore; in 2012-13 it was 3,100 crore; in 2013-14 it was 3,511 crore; in 2014-15 it was 3,711 crore; in 2015-16 it was 3713 crore; in 2016-17 it was 3,800 crore; in 2017-18 it was 4,195 crore; in 2018-19 it was 4,700 crore; in 2019-2020, it was 4,700 crore; in 2020-21 it was 5,019 crore; in 2021-22 it was 4,810 crore and in 2022-23 it has been allocated Rs 5,020 crore.

France rallies against Islam



Roznama Sahara (February 7) reports that French President Emmanuel Macron has decided to take stringent measures to stop the spread of Islamic terrorism in the country. He announced the formation of a new organisation called 'Forum of Islam in France' with this aim. As per the reports published in media, in order to curb Islamic terrorism in the country, the French President has dissolved the organisation 'Council of Muslim Faith' which was established in 2003 and announced the formation of a new body in its place. The French Interior ministry has announced that the new organisation will include the imams of various mosques in the country, Muslim women, Muslim intellectuals and members of business community. The members will be nominated by the French government. According to the government, the aim of this institution is to get rid of extremism and terrorism from Islam and bring it under the ambit of secularism. The Muslims staying in France are also expected that instead of 'Islamic Ummah' they should focus more on adopting French nationalism.

It is to be noted that the largest group of Muslims in Europe currently stay in France whose number is stated to be

between 52 lakh to 80 lakh. Till recently, France had several Muslim countries as its colonies and hence those Muslims staying there used to get French citizenship and they had no restrictions in entering France. This apart, lakhs of Muslim infiltrators also stay in France. In the past few years, the involvement of French Muslims in terror activities has increased. In the past two years, at least 17 such violent incidents took place in France where the hands of Islamic extremists were confirmed. In these incidents, more than two dozen French citizens were killed. Two years ago, when a school teacher showed the cartoon of Prophet Mohammad in the classroom, an 18-year-old student of the French teacher cut his throat and killed him. Recently, more than a dozen mosques have been closed down in France. The French interior ministry has claimed that these masjids have become the centres that spread Islamic terrorism. Along with this, the French government has tightened the rules for Muslim expatriates to enter the country. This step has been taken to ensure that extremist Muslims do not enter France.

According to French newspapers, President Macron has taken this step in order to attract the right wing voters ahead



of the Presidential elections to be held in April. The French right wing organisations are strongly opposed to the spread of Islamic extremism in the country. They are

demanding the French government to impose stringent curbs on the entry of Muslims in the country. Meanwhile, Muslim leaders in France claimed that those in power are promoting Islamophobia in order to strengthen their grip in the power. They said that extremism is found in almost all communities but an atmosphere of wilful hatred is being created against Muslims. This is the reason why hijab and burqa

were banned right from the beginning in France. Those who violate the restrictions have to pay a huge fine.

Indonesia signs deal to purchase Rafale jets from France



Inquilab (February 12) states that France has announced the sale of 42 Rafale fighter jets to Indonesia. As per the agreement, the aircraft will be sold for 8 billion dollars. Apart from the planes, France will also be supplying other arms and ammunition to Indonesia in huge quantity. According to a spokesperson of French defence ministry, France would be signing a deal for the supply of submarines and other weapon systems. As per the report, Indonesia will become the largest country in South East Asia to purchase French weapons.

The deal is taking place at a time when an effort is on to form a new alliance between US, Britain and Australia on defence matters. The defence minister of Indonesia, after holding talks with the French defence minister, said we are getting 42 Rafale jets from France. Whereas the French defence minister said that our diplomatic relationship would prove beneficial to our security interests. He

said that Indonesia has become the next country after India in the Asian region to purchase French fighter planes. This would give us an opportunity to increase the rate of production of these planes. He said that in the first phase, six Rafale jets would be handed over to Indonesia next month as part of the agreement. The rest 36 planes would be handed over in different phases. All the planes would be supplied to Indonesia within one to one-and-a-half years.

Rebels carry out major attack on Pakistani military station in Balochistan



Inquilab (February 4) reports that the Balochistan Liberation Army has carried out a major attack on a radar station of Pakistan Army in which many Pakistani soldiers were killed. A spokesperson of Baloch Liberation Army has claimed that at least 100 Pakistani soldiers were killed, including a Major General. However, according to Pakistan government, the number of those killed was 45.

The seriousness of the incident could be gauged from the fact that according to Dawn (February 11), Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan and Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa visited the military station where the Baloch Liberation Army carried out the attack. The public relations department of Pakistan's defence ministry has claimed that the Pakistani army had cornered all the attackers, numbering nearly 40, and killed all of them. The statement also claimed that the Pakistani military station did not suffer any major damage in the attack. Imran Khan has claimed that the attack was planned by an agent of foreign elements sitting in Afghanistan. However, the brave army of Pakistan has foiled the attack by the foreign agents in the true traditions of our heroes. He said that the Pakistani army is taking effective steps so that in future such incidents could be totally stopped. We

will not allow the nefarious designs of our enemies to succeed, he said.

Siasat (February 6) has claimed that ever since the year 2022 began, there is a huge increase in the number of attacks carried out by Baloch rebels on Pakistani army in Pakistan. The Pakistan government had claimed that an army officer and a dozen soldiers were killed in an attack that took place on February 3 in Panjgur and Nushki districts in Balochistan province. Later, the government spokesperson had given a higher toll on the number of the killed in the attack. Initially, the government spokesperson had said 13 assailants were killed. Later, their number was stated to be 40. The newspaper has claimed that the attack was carried out by the banned organisation Baloch Liberation Army, whose chief is commander Bashir Zaib. According to a spokesperson of Baloch Liberation Army, the attack was carried out by the organisation's Majeed brigade and it was a successful one. The airport suffered huge damages and the radar station was destroyed. The newspaper also claimed that Pakistani ministers had said that the hands of neighbouring countries are suspected in the attack. In this connection, the names of Afghanistan and Iran are also mentioned.

USA refuses to return funds to Afghanistan



Newspapers have been publishing reports for some time now that the US, as a humanitarian measure, will soon return the frozen funds of Afghanistan to that country.

Inqilab (February 16) reports that a senior official of US administration said that even now the Biden administration will not be able to release half of the seized funds of Afghanistan worth seven billion dollars due to disputes in the court. According to a report in Dawn newspaper, US President Joe Biden, while issuing an order, said that nearly half of this fund would be handed over to the trust constituted by the US administration to extend humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. However, this order also states that it is mandatory for the administration to get permission from the court to do so. This is because half of this money has been earmarked as compensation to those affected in the September 2001 terrorist attack in United States. This issue is currently being heard in the US Federal court where a demand has been made for the full amount as compensation. A senior official of President's office said that they have to abide by the court's decision and hence it would take months for us to give any portion of this money to anyone.

New York Times stated that the issue has become more complicated now. The main reason for this is that the US has not given recognition to the Taliban government in Afghanistan so far. Another question that arises here is that whether the funds in Afghanistan Central Bank really belong to the Taliban? Due to political pressure, the US administration has decided to brief the court on the legal implications on the issue. Meanwhile, the former President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai has condemned this decision of the US to distribute nearly three-and-a-half billion dollars frozen amount of Afghan bank among the families of those affected in the 9/11 attack. He said this decision of US is a crime on the Afghan people. Hence the US President should cancel his order. It is sheer injustice to either seize or stop the funds of Afghanistan people, which I would not be able to support, he said.

In another news, a Taliban spokesperson said that if the US refuses to release our funds then we would rethink on our policy towards the US. The deputy spokesperson of Afghan government, Inamullah Samangani said that Afghanistan had nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks. The US is deliberately doing things to provoke Afghanis. It has no right to arbitrarily use the wealth of Afghanistan

and it is an open violation of agreement it has reached with Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. He said the US has to

immediately return our entire money. We will never allow any country to grab our wealth.

One more person killed in mob attack in Pakistan



Avadhnama (February 14) reports that a man has been beaten to death by a mob in Punjab province in Pakistan after being accused of allegedly insulting the Prophet of Islam. The incident took place in Tulamba in Khanewal district in Punjab. Inspector general of Punjab police Rao Sardar Ali Khan has presented a comprehensive report on the incident to the Chief Minister of Punjab Usman Buzdar. As per this report, a case has been registered against 300 persons on charges including murder and under provisions of Anti-Terrorism Act. In this connection, the Pakistan police have so far arrested 62 suspected persons, including the prime accused. The Pakistan police have been conducting massive raids in the region in order to nab the culprits.

According to police, after reports about the incident appeared on social media, the accused had gone absconding and the police constituted special teams across the country in order to trace them. According to police, Jungle Tera village in Tulamba, it was announced from a

masjid that a man had burnt the pages of Quran, on which hundreds of people gathered on the spot. The police claimed that soon after the incident, they took the accused into their custody. However, the angry mob forcibly released him from police custody. However, he has been shouting that he was innocent and he did not do any such thing. The mob tied him up to a tree and then lynched him to death.

Prime Minister Imran Khan condemned this incident and said no person or crowd will be permitted to take law into own hands and mob lynching will be dealt with an iron hand. He announced that stringent action would be taken against those police personnel who failed to stop the incident. Pakistan's federal minister for information and broadcasting Fawad Choudhury admitted that the tendency to resort to violence and terrorism is growing in Pakistani society. He said that mob lynching of any person is a condemnable act and every sect of Muslim should condemn this act so that such incidents could be stopped in future.

USA claims to have killed ISIS chief



Inqilab (February 4) reports that US President Joe Biden has declared that the chief of terrorist organisation Islamic State, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, has been killed. Along with him, 14 others were also killed. The President did not give more details about this mission of the counter terrorism team of the US military. It is to be noted that in 2019, a special team of US had killed the founder of ISIS, Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi. After that, this was the second mission of the US in which another chief of this terrorist organisation was killed. According to the US President, a special team of the US military clashed with terrorists of ISIS in which 14 people were killed. They include four women and six children. Pentagon has claimed that no US soldier was killed in these attacks.

Avadhnama (February 4) reports that the US administration has announced that during an operation by the US Special Forces in the northern region of Syria, the chief of ISIS killed himself and his family members by triggering an explosion. According to Reuters news agency, earlier the US had killed the founder of this Islamic organisation Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi. After his death, Abu Ibrahim al-

Hashimi al-Qurashi had become its chief. Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi has been functioning in a top secret manner. He had claimed to become the new Khalifa of the Islamic Khilafat and his Khilafat included several regions of Syria and Iraq. Three years ago, this organisation had to face huge defeat in the war. However, despite that it has been targeting soldiers of the US and its allies in Syria and Iraq. Recently, he has been staying in Idlib in the northern region of Syria. According to French news agency AFP, the US Special Forces had surrounded the entire area. This was the biggest operation of US military since 2019. The US air force had continuously rained bombs in Idlib for nearly two hours. When al-Qurashi was cornered from all the four sides, he committed suicide along with his family. It has been claimed that 13 others were also killed in the action, including seven Iraqi nationals. The AFP reporter has done an inspection of the houses that were targeted by the US Special Forces. An eyewitness said that he woke up on hearing the sound of a helicopter and after that he heard several blasts. The US forces announced that they were not doing anything to



ordinary citizens. We are moving to the buildings of terrorists to save you from them, the announcement said.

Mumbai Urdu News (February 5) reports that a US military spokesperson claimed that the US army had given an opportunity to al-Hashimi al-Qurashi to surrender but instead of surrendering himself before the US, he triggered a blast that killed himself and his family. Those who died included his wife and two children. The spokesperson said they confirmed the death of al-Qurashi through a DNA test.

Etemaad (February 3) reports that the Iraqi police have launched a nationwide drive against ISIS. Earlier, this organisation had targeted Baghdad international airport through rockets. However, there was no damage to life and property in this attack. According to the chief of Iraq police, the military and police have launched an operation against ISIS on the southern region of Kirkuk. According to police spokesperson Amir Noori, during a search in a locality named Rashaad, a large number of weapons and ammunition were seized and several people linked to the organisation were taken into custody. It is to be noted that in June 2014, this organisation had seized several cities of Iraq like Mosul, Salahuddin, Diyala and Kirkuk. However, later the US military had liberated majority of these regions from ISIS. However, the organisation continued to launch attacks despite the defeats.

Avadhnama (February 5) states that the Iraqi army has announced that till now a dozen terrorists were killed in the campaign launched against ISIS. According to the report of Anadolu news agency, the chief of Iraqi army had announced that in the past 10 days, more than 100 terrorists were killed and the campaign is still on. He said that the Iraqi army had to undertake this operation because this organisation had stepped up its attack in Iraq's northern and

eastern regions. According to 'Mehr' news agency, it was after the intelligence sources had handed over definite information regarding the cadre of ISIS to the Iraqi army that the action became a success. They also said that they would not allow any kind of terrorist activities on its soil.

Siasat (February 12) in its editorial stated that the killing of ISIS chief Ibrahim al-Hashimi took place at the hands of the US at a time when the terrorist organisation was trying to become active in Syria and Iraq once again. Interestingly, the US had claimed that by killing Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi, it had broken the back of Islamic State but despite that it continues to hold sway in different cities of Iraq and Syria even now. ISIS claims that its branches are active in different countries of the world. Its activities have increased in Afghanistan and Western Africa and it is spreading its tentacles very fast in Asia.

The newspaper said that so far the US has failed to crush this organisation. According to observers, though the US has claimed to have killed a man named Ibrahim al-Hashimi, he is not the real Khalifa and hence his death will not put an end to the activities of ISIS. It is strange that both Baghdadi and al-Qurashi had made Idlib their centre and Syria had repeatedly failed to capture the place. The region is currently under the control of Abu Mohammad al-Julani, who is linked to al-Qaida. Al-Baghdadi had sent him to Syria in 2013. He started the civil war in Syria

and took over the control of Al Qaida there. If this region remains in the hands of jihadis, more Baghdadis and Qurashis will be born here. Those involved in fighting to overthrow the Shia government of Bashar Al-Assad in Syria, they have the support of Islamic State. However, till now they are unable to achieve their aim because Syrian

President Bashar Al-Assad has the support of Russia. After the withdrawal of the US troops from Afghanistan and the taking over of power by Taliban it was feared that the terrorists of Islamic State would create problem for Taliban. However, till now they have not created any hurdles in the path of Taliban. ■

USA lifts sanctions imposed on Iran

Inqilab (February 6) reports that the US has announced to withdraw the sanctions imposed on Iran under the nuclear deal that Iran had signed with world powers. The US President has announced that it has lifted the sanctions imposed on Iran's civilian nuclear programme. Ahead of the talks being held in Vienna, the US Secretary of State signed on the documents to end various sanctions. It is to be noted that in 2015 Iran had signed a deal on its nuclear development programme due to pressure from the US and various European nations but in 2018, Donald Trump had disassociated himself from this deal. The US foreign department said that this step was taken in order to ensure that the talks currently being held with Iran in Vienna become successful. After the sanctions were lifted, foreign companies have got permission to work at Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant, Heavy Water Plant in Arak and at Atomic Research Centre in Tehran.

It is to be noted that after Trump unilaterally left this deal, Iran also started violating the deal and it started increasing the rate of nuclear enrichment at its different nuclear power plants. Enriched Uranium is used for making nuclear bombs. Right from the beginning, the world has been putting pressure on Iran to use the development of nuclear energy only for peaceful purposes. Iran had announced that it would not take part in the Vienna talks till the US announces lifting of all restrictions it had imposed on Iran.

Avadhnama (February 3) reports that the head of Iran's atomic energy organisation had said that development of nuclear energy is essential for the



development of the country. Mohammad Islami was speaking on Iranian Television on the 43rd anniversary of Iran's Islamic revolution. Before this, he met the family members of Iran's top nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh. This Iranian scientist was killed by Israel's intelligence agency Mossad.

Mumbai Urdu News (February 8) reports that the Israel Prime Minister has held detailed talks with US President on the nuclear development programme of Iran. After this, he told reporters that the nuclear development programme being undertaken by Iran is a serious threat to Israel. This is because Iran could target Israel with nuclear weapons at any point of time. Hence it is necessary to stop Iran from developing nuclear energy. He said that it is a fact that Iran is preparing to launch an attack on Israel.

Qaumi Tanzeem (February 6) in its editorial welcomed the lifting of sanctions imposed by the US on Iran and said that Iran should be given permission to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The newspaper claimed that the US had to kneel down as Iran had adopted a strong stand in this connection.

Inqilab (February 7) reports that Iran, while welcoming the lifting of sanctions by the US, said that it is a step in

the right direction but it won't be enough. These things should not be limited to the papers, Iran said. ■

Houthis attack airport in Saudi Arabia



Inqilab (February 12) reports that the Saudi military has claimed that it has foiled a drone attack by Houthi rebels on the Abha airport situated in the border. Nearly a dozen people were injured as the debris of the drone fell on them. The Saudi government has claimed that the drone was destroyed by missile even before it could attack. This is not the first time that the Houthis have targeted this airport. They had launched several such attacks in the past. A Houthi spokesperson, while taking responsibility of the attack via a tweet, said that they would continue to target the airports being used by Saudi Arabia to launch attacks on Yemen. He appealed to citizens to keep themselves away from such places.

It is to be noted that the clashes between Houthis and Saudi have been continuing for the past several years and thousands of people have been killed till now. In the recent years, the rebels in Yemen have started targeting an important partner of the Saudi alliance namely United Arab Emirates. Those injured in the attacks include people from Bangladesh, Indian, Nepal, Philippines and Sri Lanka.

Etemaad (February 4) reports that United Arab Emirates had claimed that they had foiled the fourteenth attack by Houthi rebels. Four drones of Houthis had violated the UAE airspace. As per news published in Dawn newspaper, the 'Promise Brigade' of Houthis has taken the responsibility for the attack. This was the first time this group has taken the responsibility for the attacks on UAE. A spokesperson of the defence ministry of UAE claimed that it is fully prepared to face any kind of challenges and is taking all right steps to protect the country. The US has announced that it is sending its fighter jets to UAE following the latest attacks in order to extend help to UAE and to protect its country from the attack by Houthis. It is to be noted that the Houthi rebels had attacked UAE three times in the past in which more than two dozen people were killed so far and many have been injured.

Siasat (February 4) reports that after the attack by Houthis on United Arab Emirates, the US had sent its ships to extend help to the defence of UAE. The US took this step on a request from the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. According to the US defence

department, the ships sent to extend help to UAE were equipped with guided missiles. The US Embassy has made it clear that the US will extend all help to United Arab Emirates and it totally stands by its strategic partner. The Houthis have started targeting UAE after the visit of Israeli president to the country and had also declared that they would continue to target UAE.

Hamara Samaj (February 3) reports that the commander of the Saudi Joint Forces in Yemen, Lt General Mutlaq bin Salem has alleged that whatever steps the US and Saudi Arabia had taken to establish peace in the region those were responded to through violent actions by Iran-supported Houthi rebels. He said that our forces continuously maintained peace for nearly eight months. However, the Houthi rebels sabotaged our every effort to maintain peace. The Houthis fired more than 100 missiles on residential areas and at residents and targeted citizens using



drones. At least 52 ships were attacked. This apart they targeted Abha airport and Najran airport. They also tried to destroy the drinking water plants in Riyadh and Damam. Now this cannot be tolerated any more. Hence we took the decision to give them a fitting reply.

Judges getting killed in Iraq



Hindustan Express (February 12) reports that terrorists have stepped up their activity of killing judges in Iraq. From 2003 till now, hundreds of judges have been killed. This month, Islamic terrorists killed a judge Ahmad Faizal Al Saadi in Maysan in southern Iraq. In the past five years, 74 judges were killed. The judges who have been targeted include those hearing cases on corruption, terrorism and on smuggling of narcotic substances. The chief of the security wing of Iraq told Arabia.com that

the Iraq government has decided to give effective security to the judges so that they could be protected from the attacks by terrorists and robbers. We want our judicial system to remain independent and no pressure is exerted on the system so that the rule of the law could be implemented. He said that the Supreme Judicial Council has sent arrest warrant to the leaders of terrorist organisation ISIS and hence the terrorists are targeting the judges.

Bahrain signs security deal with Israel



Avadhnama (February 4) reports that after Bahrain and Israel established diplomatic relationship, the two countries recently signed an agreement related to security. Recently, Israel defence minister Benny Gantz visited Bahrain. It is to be noted that Bahrain had made a declaration in 2020 to establish relationship with Israel under the US pressure, which invited lot of criticism from the Arab world. In a statement, the Israel defence ministry said that in future apart from sharing of intelligence information between the two countries, there would be cooperation on military affairs as well. This agreement is a unique one for Israel in this region. Talks were being held for a long time between officials in this connection. The Israeli defence minister also visited the headquarters of the fifth fleet of US Navy located in Bahrain and said that the way the threat has been increasing to Bahrain, it is necessary that we further improve the defence tie-up with our friendly nations.

Siasat (February 16) reports that Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett paid a surprise visit to Bahrain and held long talks with the King and Crown Prince on issues of mutual interests. The visit gains importance as Iran has been making sustained efforts to increase its

nuclear capability. Recently, due to the attack on UAE by Houthis there is an increasing threat of a possible attack by Iran in the region compared to the past.

Sahafat (February 11) reports that Iran has test-fired a long range ballistic missile from Tehran for the first time and the missile has been named as ‘Khaibar Shikan.’ The missile has a range of 15,000 kilometres. Iran has claimed that it could target its enemy Israel with this missile whenever it wants. During the test-firing of this missile, Iran’s military chief Mohammad Bagheri and the head of the Aerospace Force Amir Ali Hajizadeh were also present. Iranian scientists have claimed that this missile could penetrate the iron dome system that Israel claimed to have set up. This missile is available in huge quantity with Iran. Earlier, during its military exercise, Iran had fired 15 ballistic missiles, which was considered as a warning for Israel. The distance to Israel from Iran’s western border is approximately 1,000 kilometres. Iran’s army chief Mohammad Bagheri stressed that Iran is self-dependent on the issue of manufacturing defence equipment and if the US lifts sanctions then it would be able to supply arms and ammunition manufactured in the country to various other countries in the world.

Row over dargah's precious land in Supreme Court



Etemaad (February 9) reports that an appeal will be filed before a larger bench of the Supreme Court against the verdict given by a two-member bench of the court on the issue of acquisition of land of Hyderabad's Dargah Hazrat Hassan Shah Wali. Providing information on this, the chairman of Telangana Waqf board, Mohammad Salim said that the Waqf tribunal and the high court had given their verdict in favour of the Waqf board over the 1,654 acre land of the dargah. The government had filed an appeal against the verdict in the Supreme Court. Now a two-member bench of the Supreme Court has delivered its verdict against the board. He refuted the claim that the Supreme Court had declared as illegal the Gazette notification on the dargah land. He said that the decision of the court is not in the interests of Waqf board. We will not accept it. This is Waqf land and any kind of change cannot be brought on the land.

Etemaad in its editorial has alleged that the Waqf board did not present its claims in a proper manner in the high court. As per records, the land that has been claimed as that of dargah is a prized property and after the coming into effect of the law on abolition of estates, the ownership of the property now rests with

the state government. The Supreme Court said that the policy adopted for identifying any property as a Waqf land has not been adopted in this case. Just issuing a notification in the newspapers is not enough. Hence the land belongs to the state government. After this decision, a wave of concern has erupted among the minds of Muslims and they fear that this decision could be cited in future to rid Muslims of their Waqf property. According to the newspaper, Nizam Afzal-ud-Daulah had donated 1,898 acres of land to the dargah of 17th century renowned Sufi saint Hazrat Hussain Shah Wali which has been brought under Waqf banner in 1935. The controversy erupted in 1949, when the report of a survey commissioner of Andhra Pradesh was published in the Gazette. It was mentioned that this dargah has its own property of only 1 acre in Manikurda. Till 2001-2004, the Telugu Desam Party and later the Congress governments had allocated this prized land to different institutions. In this way, nearly 80% of the Waqf land of this dargah sharif was sold off by the government. When the matter reached the high court, the court has given its verdict in favour of the Waqf board which the government has questioned in the Supreme Court.

Umar Gautam's bail plea accepted

Mumbai Urdu News (February 14) reports that due to the efforts of the legal team of Jamiat Ulema, Islamic preacher Umar Gautam, who was arrested under the anti-conversion law in Uttar Pradesh, has been granted bail. According to the newspaper, a woman teacher of Noorul Hadi English Medium School has filed a complaint with Kotwali Fatehpur



police station alleging that Hindu students are being converted to Islam. On the basis of this complaint, Uttar Pradesh police arrested Maulana Umar Gautam under the provisions of anti-conversion law. The legal secretary of Jamiat Ulema's Maharashtra unit said that the Maulana would soon be freed from the fake charges. ■

Condition of more than 100 palaces of Saddam



Siasat (February 7) reports that during his reign in Iraq, former ruler Saddam Hussain had constructed dozens of palaces. However, majority of them have either become a pile of rubble or become military stations. According to newspapers, the number of such palaces is more than 100 which are spread

over seven states. Majority of them are either in Baghdad or in Saddam's ancestral town Tikrit. In 2003, after the US attack, majority of these palaces are either destroyed or turned into military stations. The Iraq government is now planning to convert some of them into luxury hotels. ■

Hindu Temple to come up in Bahrain



Siasat (February 4) states that permission has been granted to construct a Hindu temple in Bahrain capital Manama. This mandir is being constructed under the aegis of Swaminarayan Sanstha. Bahrain government had given permission for the construction of this mandir during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

This project is being overseen by Dharmacharya Brahmavihari Swami. In the mandir premises, apart from the mandir, there will be prayer hall, library, community centre, open air theatre, shops selling books and food court.

A big Roman Catholic church is also being opened in Bahrain which was inaugurated by the Pope during his visit. The church can accommodate more than 2,500 people and it is located nearly 20 kilometres from capital Manama.

Pakistani propaganda against India on Kashmir

Mumbai Urdu News (February 6) reports that Pakistan is not giving up its efforts to use Kashmir to create an atmosphere against India at international platforms. In the past one week, Kashmir Unity Day was observed on behalf of Pakistan at its different embassies and a venomous propaganda has been unleashed against India. Pakistan's intelligence agency ISI has stepped up its campaign against India through social media platforms like



Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Pakistan's foreign ministry directed its embassies spread over the world to organise Kashmir Day in every embassy on February 10 and raise the Kashmir issue

strongly through media. The interesting thing is that the Pakistan which is staging a drama expressing concern over Muslims has become a silent spectator over the torture of Uyghur Muslims in China and has termed it as an internal matter of China.

80 lakh Aab-e-Zamzam bottles distributed in Mecca




Etemaad (February 13) reports that in the first half of the Hijri year that has started in Mecca, 80 lakh bottles of the holy aab-e-zamzam water have been distributed among Muslims of different countries. Every bottle contains 200 millilitres of aab-e-zamzam. It is to be noted that for Muslims aab-e-zamzam is considered as holy like the Ganga jal. The Well called

zamzam was started by Hazrat Ibrahim. The Saudi government has started a major project to supply bottled zamzam to Muslim pilgrims who visit the country on the occasion of Haj and Umrah. Two smart robots have been installed at Masjid Al-Harem in Mecca and Masjid-e-Nabwi in Medina with the aim to distribute the bottles of aab-e-zamzam.

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