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## Row over permission to Hindus to do puja in the tehkhana of Gyanvapi structure



- Attacks on Shobha Yatras celebrating *pran pratishtha* of Ram Mandir
- Pakistan and Iran attack each other with missiles

- Iran attacks Israel, US bases in Iraq
- Death sentence to 15 activists of Popular Front

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## Contents

<b>Summary</b>	03
<b><u>National</u></b>	
Row over permission to Hindus to do puja in the tehkhana of Gyanvapi structure	04
ASI report confirms existence of large temple's ruins beneath Gyanvapi structure	09
Attacks on Shobha Yatras celebrating <i>pran pratishtha</i> of Ram Mandir	12
Death sentence to 15 activists of Popular Front	15
Uttarakhand to become the first state to implement Uniform Civil Code	18
BJP's plan to get Muslim votes	20
<b><u>World</u></b>	
Pakistan and Iran attack each other with missiles	23
Women must be married to take up jobs in Afghanistan	26
Extremists commit mass murder of barbers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	27
Campaign against mysterious disappearances of Baloch leaders	27
Principal summoned in court over students offering namaz in Britain	29
<b><u>West Asia</u></b>	
Iran attacks Israel, US bases in Iraq	30
Talks between India and Iran over Chabahar Port project	31
OIC condemns inauguration of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya	32
Preparations on to open liquor outlets in Saudi Arabia	35
US nod to sell F-16 fighter jets to Turkiye	35

## Summary

The Archaeological Survey of India has conducted a survey of Gyanvapi premises with the help of most-modern technology. The survey report confirms that it was on the orders of Mughal ruler Aurangzeb that the mandir of Bhagwan Adi Vishweshwar in Varanasi was destroyed and the Gyanvapi mosque was constructed. It has been said in the survey report that six ancient inscriptions were also found there, from which it is clear that a temple existed there before Gyanvapi mosque. This apart, it has also been confirmed that a Shivling was among a number of destroyed murtis buried in the ground. The survey report has also confirmed that the razed pillars and other material were re-used in the construction of Gyanvapi mosque and tombs were built over the walls of the temple and converted it to a masjid.

This dispute took a new turn recently. The district court in Varanasi has permitted Hindus to do puja-archana at the Vyasji Tehkhana on Gyanvapi premises. The court has accepted the argument of Hindu side that the family of Somnath Vyas used to conduct puja-archana at the tehkhana till 1993. Later the ruling Mulayam Singh government in Uttar Pradesh had imposed a ban on it. Though the Intezamia Committee of Gyanvapi challenged this decision of the district court in the Allahabad High Court, the court refused to ban puja-archana.

As a result of the atmosphere created by some sections against the *pran pratishtha* of Ram Lalla at the Ram temple built in Ayodhya, the Shobha Yatras of Bhagwan Ram taken out in different parts of the country were pelted with stones and attacked in a planned manner. Meanwhile, though the Union government had warned of stringent action against anyone trying to vitiate the atmosphere through newspapers or social media, a number of Urdu newspapers and people belonging to a particular community tried to incite public sentiments in a planned manner.

A court in Kerala has awarded death sentence to 15 activists of banned extremist Islamic organisation, Popular Front of India. They were accused of the brutal murder of a BJP office-bearer, Ranjit Srinivasan, nearly two years ago. As per media reports, this was the first time in recent years that a court has awarded death sentence to as many as 15 people on charges of killing a single person. It is to be noted that the Union government had already imposed a ban on Popular Front and eight other organisations linked to it on charges of conspiring to establish Islamic rule in India at the behest of foreign powers and for fanning the flames of terrorism.

Tremendous tension has arisen in the relationship between Pakistan and Iran. Pakistan's allegation is that Iran attacked its territory using missiles and killed several people. As a retaliatory step, the Pakistani military targeted Iranian areas. Following this incident, the two countries announced the withdrawal of their respective Ambassadors from the other country. The Iran government has also admitted that some unidentified gunmen opened indiscriminate firing and killed nine Pakistani citizens in an Iranian town. These Pakistani citizens were doing labour work in Iran.

## Row over permission to Hindus to do puja at tehkhana of Gyanvapi structure



A court in Varanasi has recently given permission to Hindus to do puja-archana at the Vyasji tehkhana in Gyanvapi.

**Roznama Sahara** (February 3) reports that the Intezamia Committee of Gyanvapi has challenged this decision of the district court before the Allahabad High Court. While hearing the case, the court refused to stay the puja-archana being conducted at Vyasji tehkhana in Gyanvapi. The next hearing in this case will be held on February 6. However, the high court had directed that a stringent security arrangement shall be made on the premises of Gyanvapi. Following this order of the court, the juma namaz was offered at Gyanvapi premises under stringent security arrangements. Since the number of namazis was much more than the expected, the police and the administration sent a number of them to other masjids to offer namaz, citing the huge crowd on Gyanvapi premises. Protest marches were taken out in Muslim-majority areas of Varanasi against this decision of the court. This apart, Muslim women were also directed not to step out of their houses.

**Inquilab** (February 3) states that Muslim organisations and leaders are very angry over the stand of the court and they

are also criticising the judiciary. Addressing a press conference in Delhi, the Muslim leaders alleged that the murtis were placed in the tehkhana of Gyanvapi at midnight with the connivance of the administration and the puja-archana was started. This press conference was jointly addressed by chairman of Muslim Personal Law Board Maulana Khalid Saifullah Rahmani, chief of Jamiat Ulema Maulana Arshad Madani, chief of Jamiat Ahle Hadees Maulana Asghar Ali Imam Madani Salafi, chief of Jamiat Ulema (Mahmoud group) Maulana Mahmoud Madani, vice-chairman of Jamaat-e-Islami Malik Mohtasim Khan, Imam of Fatehpur masjid Maulana Mufti Mukarram Ahmed, president of Welfare Party of India Qasim Rasool Ilyas and Kamal Farooqui. In the press conference, it was alleged that the permission for puja at Gyanvapi premises was a result of the benevolence of the administration and judiciary.

These Muslim leaders described the verdict of Varanasi district judge as wrong and baseless. The judge had contended that the family of Somnath Vyas used to do puja-archana at the tehkhana of Gyanvapi till 1993, which was stopped on the directions of the then state government.





The Muslim leaders claimed that no puja was ever held in the tehkhana and the district judge delivered a highly objectionable verdict based on false and baseless claims just a day before his retirement day. Similarly, on the basis of the report of Archeological Survey of India, tension and disintegration are being created in the society. Muslim leaders claimed that this issue is not limited to Gyanvapi. False claims are being made on the Shahi Idgah in Mathura, Sunehri Bagh masjid in Delhi and on various masjids and dargahs in the country. There is lot of resentment among Muslims over this.

The Muslim leaders claimed that there is a law regarding the protection of places of worship in the country but the judiciary has closed its eyes towards it. They also said that the opinion of the senior lawyer in Supreme Court, Dushyant Dave, regarding the judiciary is totally correct as it is becoming a puppet in the hands of communal elements and the administration has become a silent spectator of the violation of law. The Muslim leaders said they will take this injustice to the President's court. This apart, the Chief Justice of India will also be apprised of the flouting of the law.

**Mumbai Urdu News** (February 3) states that the chairman of Jamiat Ulema, Arshad Madani, said we had criticised the Places of Worship Act, 1991 as well and

had asked why Babri Masjid was not included in its provision? It is clear from the decision taken by the court in the Babri Masjid issue that any masjid could be seized in future. Maulana Arshad Madani said that if it goes like this then let the books on law be set on fire. If no religion is getting justice from the law, then what is the need for the law? Maulana Mahmoud Madani of Jamiat Ulema said that if the country follows the principle of 'the one who wields the stick owns the buffalo,' then it should be remembered that the hands wielding the stick will also change. He said that the independence of judiciary is the biggest strength of a democratic country. If we are unable to maintain it, then it will be the biggest threat to democracy. Are preparations on to bring dictatorship in the country? asked Mahmoud Madani.

**Qaumi Tanzeem** (February 3) in its editorial expressed concern over the stand of the district judge and Allahabad High Court and described their verdicts as against the Constitution and the law.

**Aurangabad Times** (February 1) reports that the court, while accepting the petition of the Hindu side, has granted them the right to do puja at the tehkhana of Gyanvapi. The interesting thing is that district judge Dr Ajay Kumar Vishwesh had delivered this verdict just a few hours before his retirement. A huge controversy

has erupted over this verdict by the judge. Following this verdict, the Hindus started doing puja-archana at the Vyas tekhana of Gyanvapi. The Hindu side has said that it was the biggest victory for them. Whereas the Muslims has said this verdict was wrong and also announced to file an appeal in the high court.

It is to be noted that a man named Shailendra Kumar Pathak filed a petition before the Varanasi district judge and demanded that he shall be given permission to do puja at the tekhana of the Vyas Hall located on the premises of Gyanvapi. Delivering verdict on this, the district judge said that directions shall be issued to the district magistrate that he shall allow puja to be conducted at Vyas tekhana by the pujari appointed by the Kashi Vishwanath Mandir Trust and erect metal barriers etc within a week to ensure its protection.

Lawyer for Hindu side Vishnu Shankar Jain said the district administration has been given direction to make necessary arrangements within a week to conduct puja. As soon as appropriate arrangements are made, puja will also begin there. He said that Kashi Vishwanath Mandir Trust will decide what kind of puja shall be conducted. We have completed our legal responsibilities. Now it is dependent on the Kashi Vishwanath Mandir Trust when to start the puja at the tekhana. From devotees to pujari, everyone will be permitted to go there. Vishnu Shankar Jain said that he sees this issue also in the same perspective as the order issued by Justice K M Pandey to open the locks of the Ram Janmabhumi on February 1, 1986. This is an important turn in the history of this country. He said that a government misused its power and stopped the Hindu samaj from doing puja-rituals. Today, the court has removed this injustice.

Lawyer of Muslim side or Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee, Akhlaq Ahmad, said this was a wrong decision. We will file an appeal against this in the high court. As per the report, the district administration took over the responsibility of Vyasji tekhana on January 17 on the

orders of the court. During the survey of ASI, the tekhana was cleaned. Now the district judge in his order said that the pujari appointed by Kashi Vishwanath Mandir Trust alone shall do the puja.

District judge Dr Ajay Kumar Vishwesh, who had granted permission to do puja at Vyasji tekhana in Gyanvapi, was designated to the court in Varanasi on August 21, 2021 and he retired today on January 31, 2024. A few hours before his retirement, he delivered this verdict in favour of Hindus. In the past two years, Dr Ajay Kumar Vishwas had delivered many important verdicts in the Gyanvapi case. This include the verdict to conduct the survey by Archaeological Survey of India, decision on the issue of puja at Shringar Gauri, decision to hand over the Vyas tekhana to the district administration, decision to hand over the report of Archeological Survey of India to both sides and now permission for Hindu side to conduct puja-rituals at tekhana of Vyasji.

Commenting on this verdict of the court, chief of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen, Asaduddin Owaisi said this was an open violation of the law regarding the protection of places of worship. He said that earlier this judge had appointed a receiver on January 17. There was already an indication from it on which direction the case was proceeding. He said it was totally wrong to give permission to do puja at the tekhana of Gyanvapi. The destruction of Babri Masjid is likely to be repeated here.

Spokesperson of All India Muslim Personal Law Board, Syed Qasim Rasool Ilyas, has condemned the judgment of the district judge. He said the argument that the family of Somnath Vyas used to do puja at this tekhana was totally wrong and later this was stopped on the directions of the state government. He said the district administration had brought the tekhana under its control on January 17. Earlier, the court in its order had also said that status quo should be maintained, but now how come the court granted permission to do puja there? This is totally deplorable. Earlier in 2021, five Hindu women had



filed a petition in a local court and said that this was a Hindu mandir, and there used to be the designated puja rituals. Aurangzeb had destroyed the temple and constructed a masjid in its place and hence we shall be given permission to do puja there.

Later, the Intezamia committee of the masjid, while questioning it in the Supreme Court, said that under the provisions of Places of Worship Act, 1991, it is necessary to maintain the status quo there and the Supreme Court once again sent it back to the district court. The district court, however, delivered the verdict that neither this law nor the Waqf Act is applicable on Gyanvapi. Following this, the court issued an order to conduct a survey on Gyanvapi premises. Later the survey team declared the fountain in the pond as Shivling and prohibited the use of pond. Now, even when the issue was yet to be closed, the court in another order directed the Archaeological Survey of India to conduct a survey of Gyanvapi. The ASI in its report said that the ruins of a big temple were found within the Gyanvapi. Now, in another verdict, permission has been granted to do puja in the tehkhana of Gyanvapi. Ilyas said that after the construction of Ram Mandir in the place of Babri Masjid, now hundreds of masjids and dargahs present across the country are being targeted. He demanded the Supreme Court to intervene in the issue and said that the law regarding the Places of Worship Act should be strictly implemented.

**Aurangabad Times** (February 2) states that within eight hours of the order of the district judge granting permission to

conduct puja at the Vyas tehkhana in Gyanvapi, murtis were installed there and the puja-rituals started. The arrangement for this puja was made by the district magistrate of Varanasi. Following this, the Muslim side approached the Supreme Court, but it refused to hear the petition and directed that they approach the Allahabad High Court. As per the report, a ban was imposed on conducting puja-rituals nearly 30 years

ago during the regime of Mulayam Singh Yadav. In this case, the lawyer for Hindu side, Vishnu Shankar Jain, said that the orders of the court have been complied with and after installing the murtis, the Sandhya Arati was performed by the pujari of Kashi Vishwanath Mandir Trust and an Akhand Jyoti was also lit. He said that arati will be performed for all devatas in the morning, evening and at night every day. Another lawyer involved in this case, Sohan Lal Arya, said that we are feeling proud. The court has given justice to us. The previous Samajwadi Party government had deprived the Hindus of the right to do puja in an arbitrary manner, which the court has reinstated now.

As per another news published in the same newspaper, the Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami, Syed Sadatullah Hussaini, has expressed regret over permission granted to Hindus to do puja in the tehkhana of Gyanvapi. He said that this verdict of the court is an open violation of the Places of Worship Act, 1991 as well as different orders given by various courts to maintain status quo.

**Etemaad** (February 1) states that the chief of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen, Asaduddin Owaisi, described the decision of the district court in Varanasi as wrong and said that the district judge himself has accepted that no puja has taken place in tehkhana after 1993. Then on what basis did he grant permission to do puja once again. The court should have granted one month's time to the managing committee of the masjid to go on appeal against this verdict. He said that the manner

in which the murtis were shifted inside Babri Masjid at the dead end of the night in 1949, the same history is repeating again. After the demolition of Babri Masjid, the Ram Mandir was built in its place with the connivance and protection of the government. Are preparations being made to do the same in Varanasi as well?

**Mumbai Urdu News** (February 1) in its editorial said that the permission granted by the district court in Varanasi to do puja-rituals in the tehkhana of Gyanvapi is not acceptable to the Muslims in the country. Due to this decision, fissures will be created in the country and unrest will spread. It was being said in the editorial that there was no shortage of such judges whose eyes are blindfolded by religious fanaticism. Earlier, in the Babri Masjid issue, even till the Supreme Court overlooked all facts and the property of masjid was handed over for the construction of Ram Mandir. Now this story is being repeated at the Gyanvapi in Varanasi. Hence, Muslims should never accept this decision under any circumstance.

**Urdu Times** (February 1) in its editorial has alleged that the story of Babri Masjid is now being repeated in Gyanvapi. All these are being done as a well-planned conspiracy. The civil judge who delivered the verdict has retired. Now the Modi government will give him some big post as a reward. In the same way, the judges who delivered the Babri Masjid case were also obliged. The newspaper, while provoking Muslims, said that whatever happens against Muslims under this government, it will still be less. As of now, permission has been granted to do puja at the tehkhana of Gyanvapi. Tomorrow, even if the entire masjid is converted into a mandir, the Muslims will not be able to do anything, because the conscience of the Muslim has died. A dead entity can not understand importance of Islam and Shariah.

The newspaper suggested that Muslims should give their children training in law so that they become judges. Then only Muslims will get justice. Otherwise,

these people will never stop trying to prove these masjids as mandirs. Now preparations are on to stake claim on hundreds of masjids. Muslims should be prepared to face this danger.

**Avadhnama** (February 3) in its editorial has called upon Muslims to get ready for the march to protect Gyanvapi because now like Babri, claims are made about the discovery of ruins of mandir beneath the Gyanvapi. This report is not a general opinion, instead this report was prepared in the guise of most modern equipment. Muslims should be aware about the dangers which are forthcoming.

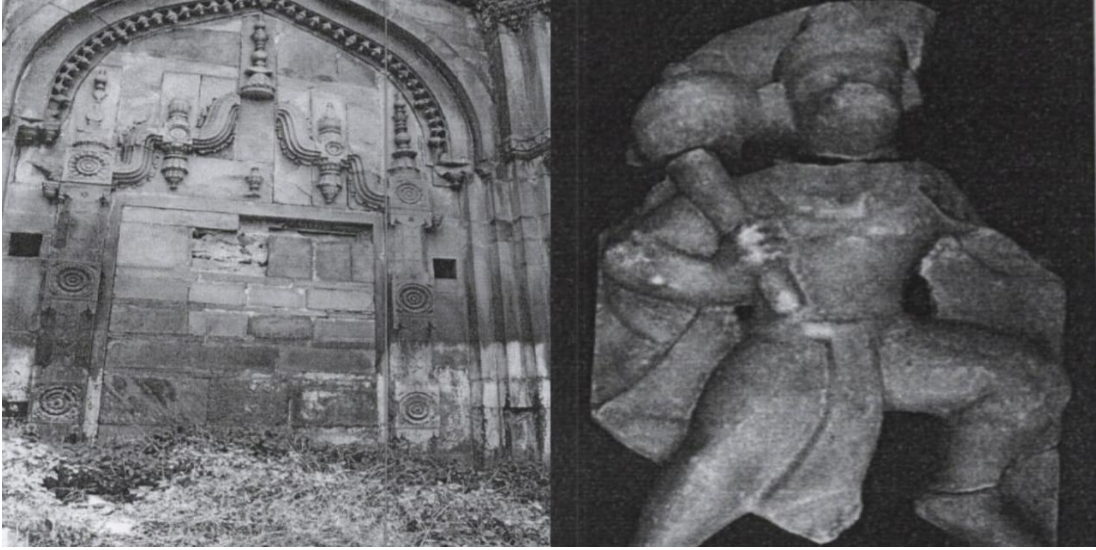
**Sahafat** (February 3) in its editorial said that even before the verdict in the Gyanvapi, we assumed that the court will find fault only with us. The newspaper alleged that a section of the judiciary has come under the influence of the majority community and hence instead of giving a just verdict, it is delivering verdicts after coming under the pressure of the government. Yesterday, Babri Masjid went out of our hands and now Gyanvapi is also going out of the hands. The next target is the Shahi Idgah Masjid in Mathura. Seeing these incidents, it doesn't look like the future of Islam and Muslims is safe in this country. Muslims need to think seriously about dealing with this increasing danger.

**Taasir** (February 3) also said that the policies of the present government are anti-Islam and anti-Muslim. They want to wipe out the minorities and bring majoritarianism in the country. Muslims need to remain aware about the dangerous intentions of the government.

**Roznama Sahara** (February 3) states that the chief of Darul Uloom Deoband Maulana Abul Qasim Nomani appealed to Muslims across the country that they raise their voices against the decision by the court to grant permission to do murti puja on Gyanvapi premises. They go to masjid and silently offer namaz and express their protest. He alleged that it looks like this country is rapidly moving towards the dictatorship of the majoritarianism.



## ASI report confirms ruins of large temple beneath Gyanvapi structure



**Aurangabad Times** (January 26) reports that on the directions of the district judge, the report of the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) on the Gyanvapi premises has been handed over to both sides. In the report, it has been claimed that a massive structure of an ancient temple was found beneath the Gyanvapi mosque. The Hindu side has expressed satisfaction over this and said that if the masjid was constructed after demolishing the mandir, then it should be handed over to Hindus and Hindus should be given permission to do puja there. On the other hand, the Muslim side has announced to take the legal battle forward. The Masjid Intezamia Committee has demanded a ban on the media coverage of this report, which the court rejected. They also demanded that permission shall not be given to make the report available through email.

It is to be noted that the court of district judge of Varanasi Dr Ajay Kumar Vishwesh had ordered a scientific survey of the Gyanvapi premises on July 21, 2023. Following this, an ASI team conducted a survey of the entire premises except the sealed Wazukhana and presented its report to the court. The court had also directed that during the survey no digging shall be conducted anywhere in the present

structure because it could inflict damages on it. The court had directed that the modern radar technology shall be used to conduct the survey. A part of the survey report has also got published in the media. The lawyer for Hindu side said that there is historical evidence to prove that this masjid was constructed after demolishing the mandir of Bhagwan Adi Vishweshwar. He also claimed that the parts of demolished structure were obtained from near the western wall of the Gyanvapi premises. He said that now the ASI has to investigate the three domes and the Vyasji tehkhana also using the radar system. The ASI team prepared a report of 1,600 pages after conducting a study for 136 days. In this survey, the scientists studied up to a depth of 10 metre using GPR technique in which the remains of ancient murtis and other material belonging to the demolished temple were found.

**Urdu Times** (January 25) states that the Intezamia Committee of the masjid has filed a petition before the Allahabad High Court against the order of the district judge to conduct a scientific survey of the Gyanvapi premises. On August 3, 2023, the court rejected this petition and upheld the decision of the district judge to conduct a survey of the Gyanvapi premises using

most modern equipment. Following this, the experts of ASI conducted this survey with the help of most modern equipment.

**Urdu Times** (January 26) in its editorial said that as per the Hindu side, concrete evidence have been obtained regarding the mandir beneath the masjid. The newspaper said that if the masjid was constructed there after demolishing the mandir, then the court may also give the order to construct the mandir there once again. That's how the Supreme Court had given the verdict in the Babri Masjid issue. However, the Muslim side has announced they would question this verdict in the high court, but there will not be any benefit from it. In the Babri Masjid issue, the Muslims had all the documents regarding the ownership of the land and there was no concrete evidence to show that Babri Masjid was constructed after demolishing some temple. Despite this, the Supreme Court had said that the Hindu belief is linked to this spot and hence the property shall be handed over to Hindus. If the Muslims want, they can construct their masjid at another place and the government shall provide land for the same.

It has been said about the masjid in Varanasi that there is concrete evidence to prove that there is a mandir beneath the masjid. Now the next work will be done by the court. The Muslims will again keep rubbing hands. They will remain patient or leave it to Allah. Other than this, what else can a Muslim do? They neither have any unity among themselves nor any effort is being made for it. Every Muslim is happy about himself. Everyone is trying to show each other down. Nobody cares what is happening with the community? In such a situation, like the Babri Masjid, if the Gyanvapi and the Shahi Idgah are destroyed and mandirs are constructed on those places, what can anyone do with it?

**Roznama Sahara** (January 24) reports that a member of Ram Janmabhumi survey team and former regional director of ASI, Dr K K Muhammad has urged Muslims that they hand over the Gyanvapi in Varanasi and the Shahi Idgah in Mathura

to Hindus because Kashi, Mathura and Ayodhya are the holy places of Hindus. These are linked to Bhagwan Shiv, Bhagwan Krishna and Bhagwan Ram. Whereas the Muslims do not have any emotional attachment with the masjids constructed there.

**Roznama Sahara** (January 25) reports that the international working president of Vishwa Hindu Parishad and senior lawyer Alok Kumar said the ASI report has confirmed that the Gyanvapi was constructed after demolishing a grand mandir. The ruins of this temple are found even now. The report also proves that the domes of the masjid were built on the walls of the ancient temple and the ruins of the temple were used for the construction of the temple. The structure of the temple has many ancient inscriptions and broken idols, which confirm the presence of the temple there. In such a situation, Muslims should hand over the Gyanvapi premises to Hindus so that they could construct the temple there. As far as masjid is concerned, Muslims could construct it in any other place. We do not have any threat from it.

**Etemaad** (January 28) states that the management committee of Gyanvapi said that on the pretext of the survey report of ASI, the propaganda being unleashed by the Hindu side that the ruins of an ancient temple were found beneath this masjid should not be taken seriously by Muslim community and they should wait for the decision of the court. Meanwhile, Union minister Giriraj Singh appealed to Muslims that taking cognizance of the ASI report, Muslims hand over the Gyanvapi premises to Hindus so that a grand mandir could be constructed there. He said the communal harmony in the country will improve due to this.

**Comment:** The ASI report on the Gyanvapi issue has become public. As per this report, the structure of an ancient temple was found inside the Gyanvapi premises. On this, the Hindu side said that it is clear from the survey report that the masjid was constructed here after demolishing the temple. Now the Gyanvapi

premises should be handed over to the Hindus, so that they could do puja-archana there. On the other hand, the Muslim side has announced a legal battle on this matter. The Muslim side, while citing the Places of Worship Act (Special Provisions), 1991, has been demanding a Constitutional ban on this. They say that the law



provides for maintaining status quo at all places of worship. Whereas the Hindu side claim that there is a 100-foot high swayambhu jyotirling of Adi Vishweshwar beneath the Gyanvapi premises located in Varanasi.

It is to be noted that the Kashi Vishwanath mandir was built by Maharaja Vikramaditya nearly 2050 years ago, but Mughal invader Aurangzeb demolished the temple there in 1669 and constructed a masjid in its place, which is known as Gyanvapi. As per the survey report of ASI, Aurangzeb had destroyed the Kashi Vishwanath mandir in 1669 and constructed a masjid in its place. The pillars of the demolished temple were used in the construction of the masjid. In the manuscripts obtained from the spot, names like Janardhan, Rudra and Umeshwar were prominently mentioned. This apart, some ancient manuscripts of some south Indian languages were also found other than Sanskrit, which has confirmed the presence of the mandir.

As per the survey report of ASI, ruins belonging to the temple were found in 32 places. The western wall of the Gyanvapi is a part of Hindu temple. There the religious symbols of Hindus are present. There are several such pillars in this temple, which were found to have the murtis of Hindu devi-devatas. Manuscripts

written in Sanskrit, Devnagiri, Telugu and Kannada languages were also found. In one place, Mahamukti Mandap was also mentioned. It could be confirmed from it that this was a mandir. A number of murtis of Hindu devi-devatas were found in the tehkhana of Gyanvapi. On behalf of the Hindu side, senior lawyer of Supreme Court, Vishnu Shankar Jain told reporters that now a request will be made to conduct a survey of Wazukhana, which has been sealed in the premises of Gyanvapi.

It is said that the survey of the Gyanvapi premises was conducted under a court order in the issue of Ma Shringar Gauri case. It was claimed that the Shivling of Adi Vishweshwar was found in the Wazukhana of the Gyanvapi on May 16, 2022. On the demand of the Hindu side, the Wazukhana was sealed on the orders of the court. Lawyer of Hindu side Vishnu Shankar Jain claimed that it has been clearly mentioned in Section 3 and 4 of Places of Worship (Special Provision) Act, 1991, that status quo shall be maintained at any place of worship as it was on August 15, 1947. Jain said that the court in Varanasi in September 2022 in its verdict in the Gyanvapi case said that the Hindu side used to do puja-rituals on the premises till November 1993, hence the Places of Worship (Special Provision) Act, 1991 cannot be made applicable here. ■



## Attacks on Shobha Yatras celebrating *pran pratishtha* at Ram Mandir



The Home Ministry and the Information and Broadcasting Ministry of India had issued a stern warning that those who try to incite communal sentiments through newspapers or social media during the *pran pratishtha* ceremony of Ram Mandir or provoke to indulge in violence, then stringent action would be taken against the accused. Despite such a warning, Shobha Yatras taken out by Ram Bhakts were attacked in several places in the country and the posters mentioning about the construction of Ram Mandir were destroyed. In Maharashtra, several incidents of stone-pelting on Shobha Yatras took place.

**Inquilab** (January 22) states that stone-pelting on Shobha Yatras took place in several places. In order to control the situation, the police fired tear-gas shells and also resorted lathicharge. In Mehsana district in Gujarat, some people pelted stones from roof-tops on the Sri Ram Shobha Yatras. Violence erupted over this. The police fired teargas shells in order to control the situation and also resorted to lathicharge. Later 15 people were also arrested in this connection.

**Roznama Sahara** (January 29) reports that Chittorgarh police in Rajasthan arrested a student of Mewar University belonging to Jammu and Kashmir.

According to the SHO of Gangrar police station Jayesh Patidhar, 21-year-old B Pharm student Sohrab Qayoom made some objectionable comments against Ram Mandir and Bhagwan Ram on Instagram. On the basis of the complaint of a local resident, an FIR under Section 153A and 295A of IPC was registered against Sohrab at the police station on January 25. Following this, the police arrested Sohrab. Director of Mewar University Harish Gurnani said that Sohrab has been expelled from the university. The accused student is a resident of Rajouri in Jammu-Kashmir. He was sent to Mewar University under Indian Army's Special Scholarship Yojana to get higher education. Jammu-Kashmir Student Association has protested against the action taken against Sohrab. The Association demanded from the government that the FIR registered against Sohrab shall be withdrawn, otherwise his future will be in trouble.

**Sahafat** (January 25) reports that a case was registered against 17 persons on charges of pulling down a flag in which Sri Ram was written and setting it on fire under Tilhar police station in Shahjahanpur.

**Sahafat** (January 24) states that the police have arrested a man named Pervez Khatik from Badwani district in Madhya





Pradesh on charges of making comments against the inauguration of Ram Mandir and against Bhagwan Ram on Instagram. A case has been registered against him on charges of insulting the sentiments of a section of the society.

**Roznama Sahara** (January 25) states that a few mischievous elements attacked a temple in Dinkarpur village in Muzaffarnagar district and broke the murti of Bhagwan Sri Ram. When people got to know about the incident, hundreds of people from the village gathered at the temple. The police arrived on the spot following the tense situation. The police registered a case against the accused and started a search for them. As per a report filed with the police, the sevadar of the mandir, Harimohan Tyagi, said that when he arrived at the temple in the morning to conduct puja, he found that the murti of Bhagwan Ram was broken. When enquired, he came to know that some people came there at night and attacked the mandir and broke the murti of Bhagwan Ram.

**Hamara Samaj** (January 26) reports that a man named Maulana Usman was arrested in Panipat in Haryana. He was accused of tearing off the posters pasted in connection with the construction of Ram Mandir. Later he was released on bail. According to local residents, there were some others also with the Maulana, and the police are looking for them.

**Akhbar-e-Mashriq** (January 30) reports that police have arrested one Aslam and Ballu on the complaint of a person named Ghira in Kundankalan village under Gangoh police station in Saharanpur

district. It is being said the two accused had raised slogans against Hindu devi-devatas and were putting pressure on Ghira, a member of the Dalit community for conversion.

**Akhbar-e-Mashriq** (January 24) reports that people taking part in a Sri Ram Shobha Yatra clashed with people gathered in a masjid in Shahjahanpur. Those who took out the Shobha Yatra said that they were pelted with stones. Whereas those who gathered in the masjid alleged that those taking part in the Shobha Yatra raised anti-Islam slogans and they tried to erect saffron flag on the masjid. The two sides clashed over this. Later the police arrested 15 persons in this connection.

**Mumbai Urdu News** (January 23) states that the effigy of Mughal invader Babar was set ablaze in Ayodhya and those who gathered on the spot raised 'Babar Murdabad' slogans. During this time, Muslims remained calm, otherwise the situation would have turned worse. In Delhi also some mischievous elements raised Jai Shri Ram slogans outside the masjid. On this, the Muslims who had gathered in the mosque for namaz did not react at all. In Hisar in Haryana, anti-Islam slogans were raised in a rally of Bajrang Dal and women wielding swords staged a demonstration. In a Muslim mohalla in Kheralu town in Gujarat, when the Shri Ram Shobha Yatra was passing by, the mischievous elements raised provocative slogans against Islam and Muslims. On this, the Muslims pelted stones at them, in which 18 people were injured. Muslims complained that the police, instead of taking any action against those taking part in the Shobha Yatra, took unilateral action and arrested 18 Muslims.

In Vadodara in Gujarat also, the Shobha Yatra of Bhagwan Ram was pelted with stones in which nearly two dozen people were injured. The police have also arrested some people in this connection. The police have been deployed in huge strength in this region. Similarly, in the Muslim-majority area of Mira Road in

Mumbai also, stones were pelted on Ram Shobha Yatra. The police have arrested 18 people in this connection. Those who were arrested alleged that the police were taking unilateral action. In a statement, Muslim leader Abu Asim Azmi said that the police have registered fake cases against Muslim



youths on charges of pelting stones on the Shobha Yatra of Bhagwan Ram in more than a dozen places in Maharashtra. He alleged that those people taking part in the Shobha Yatra raised provocative slogans against Islam and Muslims, but instead of taking any action against them, the police registered cases against the Muslims. In Shinghwana police station area in Siwan district in Bihar, when the Ram Shobha Yatra was passing through Muslim areas, the local residents took objections about the route of the yatra. It was alleged that stone-pelting also took place during this time. Those taking part in the Sri Ram Shobha Yatra clashed with rioters in Bhayander in Mumbai, Panvel and in Nagpur as well. The police said that these clashes started when some unidentified persons pelted stones on Shobha Yatra.

**Etemaad** (January 24) reports that the Karnataka Police arrested nearly a dozen people in connection with the communal clashes that took place in Bellari. According to police, when a group of youths was taking out the Ram Shobha Yatra, some mischievous elements pelted stones at them. Clashes started over the incident. The police resorted to lathicharge and brought the situation under control. In Gulbarga district in Karnataka, two groups clashed following stone-pelting during a procession. The police resorted to lathicharge and brought the situation under control and some people were arrested as well. Violent incidents took place in Mumbai's Muslim-majority area Naya

Nagar as well. During the incident, the police fired teargas shells and tried to bring the situation under control. In this connection, the police registered cases and started searching for the accused persons. In Jhabua district in Madhya Pradesh also there were news about people taking part in the Shobha Yatra clashing with people belonging to another community. In this connection, the police had even arrested some people. There were also reports about people taking part in the Shobha Yatra clashing with people of Muslim community in Nalgonda, Rangareddy and Vikarabad in Telangana. Cases have also been registered in this connection.

**Mumbai Urdu News** (January 24) reports that after stone-pelting on Sri Ram Shobha Yatra in Mira Road, bulldozers were used to demolish the 15 houses whose roof-tops were used to pelt stones on the Shobha Yatra, on the orders of Maharashtra government. Information was received that bulldozers were used to raze those houses located on Mohammad Ali Road as well, from where stone-pelting was done on the Shobha Yatra. Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said the police have been directed to take stringent action against those rioting elements spreading communal violence in the state.

**Aurangabad Times** (January 26) reports that following the incident in which stones were pelted on Sri Ram Shobha Yatra in Mira Road in Mumbai, the Bhayandar Municipal Corporation demolished more than 40 shops using

bulldozers. The officials of BMC said that the 15 shops at Haidari Chowk which were demolished were constructed illegally. Whereas the Muslim side said the action was taken due to communal enmity. In connection with the stone-pelting on Shobha Yatra in Naya Nagar, the police have taken 70 Muslim youths into custody. Muslims allege that this action was taken due to the pressure of BJP leaders. Whereas police commissioner Madhukar Pandey said that 14 Muslim youths were arrested in connection with stone-pelting.

**Mumbai Urdu News** (January 24) reports that slogans like ‘Justice for Babri’ ‘Fight for Babri’ and ‘Boycott for Babri’ were raised at Jamia Milia Islamia situated in Delhi. As per a viral video, two groups of students clashed in this connection during which one group also raised the

slogan of ‘Will dig the grave for Ram on the land of Jamia’ was also raised. Meanwhile, DCP, South-East Delhi, Rajesh Dev rejected claims about such an incident taking place and said this viral video is of some other place. News about stone-pelting on Sri Ram Shobha Yatra was received from Azamgarh and Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh as well. In this connection, the police have also arrested four persons. The Muslims in Agra alleged that some mischievous elements tried to enter Shahi Masjid in Tajganj area and tried to erect a saffron flag, which the police foiled. Incharge inspector of Tajganj police station Jaswir Singh confirmed this incident and said the incident took place at 4 pm. The police had registered a case in this connection, but so far nobody has been arrested.

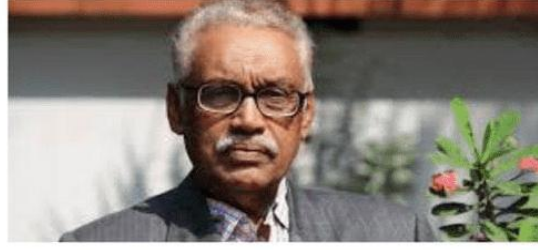
## Death sentence to 15 activists of Popular Front



**Aurangabad Times** (January 31) reports that a court in Kerala had awarded death sentence to 15 activists of banned Islamic extremist organisation Popular Front of India for the murder of a BJP leader, Ranjit Srinivasan. BJP’s OBC morcha leader Ranjit Srinivasan was murdered on December 19, 2021. Last week, the court had found 15 accused as guilty in the case. The court said that the eight convicts

Nizam, Ajmal, Anoop, Mohammad Aslam, Abdul Salam alias Salam Ponnad, Abdul Kalam, Safaruddin and Manshad directly took part in the murder of Ranjit. Whereas, the other convicts have been identified as Jaseeb Raja, Nawaz, Shamir, Nasir, Zakir Hussain, Shaji Puvathunkal and Shamnaz Ashraf. Among them the court had found four of them guilty because all these four had gone to the house of Ranjit fully





armed. Their plan was to ensure that when they attack Ranjit with the intention of killing him, Ranjit should neither escape from there nor any other person could come there to help him. The other three persons were found guilty in the conspiracy for the murder.

It is to be noted that this verdict was delivered by the Additional District Judge, Alappuzha, V G Sridevi. The lawyer for the victim said the people who were given punishment were part of a trained killer squad. The manner in which these assailants brutally killed Ranjit in front of his mother, wife and children will come under the offence of 'rarest of the rare' category. In its chargesheet in the court, the police said that on December 19, 2021 when Ranjit Srinivasan was getting ready for his morning rituals at his house located in Alappuzha, the assailants entered his house. After this, the attackers brutally assaulted Ranjit in front of his family members due to which he died on the spot. Ranjit had even contested the Assembly elections in Kerala on BJP ticket. He was a lawyer by profession.

It is being said that just a day before the murder of Ranjit, Popular Front's political wing Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI)'s secretary K S Shan was murdered. On December 18 night, when Shan was returning home on his bike, a car mowed him down. Later he was attacked with knife. He was taken to hospital where he breathed his last. The leaders of Popular

Front blamed BJP and Sangh Parivar for the murder of Shan. BJP's national general secretary C T Ravi said that Kerala government led by CPI (M) has made the state a heaven for Jihadis. Similarly, Union minister V Muraleedharan also condemned the murder. He said the Islamic terrorists have converted Kerala into a killing field and they are selectively murdering the swayamsevaks of BJP and Sangh Parivar. On the other hand, SDPI chief M K Faizi wrote on social media that the murder of Shan was part of the agenda of Sangh Parivar to destroy and finish the communal harmony in the state through violence. We condemn the terrorism of the RSS. He also said the sympathy of a major section of the Kerala Police is with the RSS.

**Hindustan Times** (January 31) reports that this was the first time in recent years that any court has been awarding death sentence to 15 people on the charges of the murder of a single person. This was confirmed by Special Public Prosecutor Pratap G Padikkal while talking to media persons. He also said the accused were also given life-term and fine apart from the death sentence. During the hearing of the case, 156 witnesses were produced in the court. This apart, 1,000 documents and 100 material objects were also presented in the court. The Kerala Police claimed that the verdict of the court has boosted the morale of the police. The investigation in this case was conducted by the police chief of Alappuzha G Jaidev. President of BJP in



Kerala K Surendran, while welcoming the verdict of the court, said they have got justice.

It is to be noted that on September 28, 2022, the Union government had announced a ban on Popular Front for five years. The Central government took this step under the UAPA Act. In this notification, eight other organisations linked to Popular Front were also banned. In the notification, the government had said the activities of Popular Front of India and other organisations linked to it are a threat to the security of the country. This organisation wants to spread the flames of terrorism throughout the country.

It is also being said here that a team of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) had conducted a raid in six states namely Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu in search of people belonging to Popular Front of India in October 2023. NIA has claimed that the Popular Front is getting huge money from abroad through hawala transactions. This organisation has been devising plans to spread violence and terrorism across the country at the behest of foreigners. The organisation had made a plan to spark riots during a visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Bihar.

Earlier in September 2022, the NIA, in a nationwide crackdown, had arrested the top leaders of Popular Front namely OMA Salam, E M Abdul Rahman, P Koya and Khalid Mohammad. OMA Salam is the chairman of Popular Front and a suspended employee of the electricity board of Kerala government. Whereas its vice-chairman E M Abdul Rahman is a trader. Similarly, P Koya is a professor in a government college. While Khalid Mohammad is a lawyer by profession.

In another case, the NIA in May 2023 arrested a man named Saahir K V who was involved in the murder of an RSS swayamsevak, Srinivasan. He was absconding after the murder of Srinivasan. The NIA had announced a reward of Rs 4 lakh on him. In this connection, 69 people were made accused, out of which one died.

The NIA had filed chargesheet against 59 accused. It was said that on April 16, 2022, RSS swayamsevak Srinivasan was brutally murdered in Palakkad in Kerala. During the NIA investigation, it was also revealed that Saahir K V was an active member of Popular Front. He was working with the aim of spreading panic among Hindus and was working with the nefarious design of establishing an Islamic rule in the country by 2047. It was also alleged that Saahir was giving protection to those accused in the murder of Srinivasan.

As per the investigation of NIA, the assailants came to the shop of Srinivasan on bikes and they attacked him with knives and household weapons. According to eyewitnesses, Srinivasan was hacked 20 times with Aruwal. Aruwal is a kind of agricultural equipment used in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, which could also be used as a weapon. Earlier in November 2021, in Elapalli area in Kerala, the Mandal Baudhik Pramukh of Sangh, A Sanjith, was also killed in front of his wife.

It is worth mentioning that a few years ago, the Kerala Police had filed a report in Kerala High Court in which it had been claimed that the activists of Popular Front had a hand in the murder of 26 activists associated with Sangh or its affiliated organisations. Then the police had sought a ban on the Popular Front, but the court did not grant permission for the same.

As per another news, in January 2023, the NIA raided the house of the PRO of Popular Front. Several important documents were seized from his custody, which included a list of the office-bearers of Kerala BJP and Sangh Parivar. They were in the hit-list of Popular Front. NIA had arrested an activist of Popular Front, Mohammad Sadiq from Kollam district. The Kerala Police complained that before conducting the raid at the house of Sadiq, the NIA did not give any indication in this connection and neither it was made aware of what kind of documents were seized from the house of the accused during the raid. Meanwhile, the NIA, while throwing



light on the background of the organisation not taking into confidence the Kerala Police, alleged that whenever in the past the local police were given information regarding the raid at the residences of the suspected leaders of Popular Front, they had informed the accused concerned, resulting in their escape before the raid.

The NIA also alleged that a section of Kerala Police sympathises with the people belonging to Popular Front. In this connection, the NIA had given a

confidential report to the Kerala Police chief in which it had been stated that 873 employees of Kerala Police maintain connections with banned extremist organisation Popular Front. They include constables to inspector and SHOs. The NIA said that people belonging to Popular Front are working with the intelligence wing and other branches of Kerala Police. The Kerala Police had rejected this report. In February 2022, a constable, P K Anas, deputed at Kilimanoor police station, was suspended from service. He was accused of leaking the details of information regarding the activists and leaders of RSS to the political wing of Popular Front namely SDPI. Action has been taken against the policeman concerned after the charges were found true during investigation. ■

## Uttarakhand to become first state to implement Uniform Civil Code



**Aurangabad Times** (January 30) states that Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama has announced that Uttarakhand will be the first state to implement the Uniform Civil Code in the country. He said that a five-member committee headed by Justice Ranjana

Prakash Desai, constituted by the state government in May 2022, has completed its work. Now, there is this possibility that the committee will hand over its report to the state government by February 2. Following this, a special session of the state Assembly will be called, where a bill will be brought seeking implementation of Uniform Civil Code in the state. Chief Minister Dhama said the BJP in its election manifesto had promised the people of Uttarakhand that if the party comes to power, then a Uniform Civil Code will be implemented in the state. Now steps are being taken to fulfil the promise being given to the people. According to sources in BJP, if the Uttarakhand Vidhan Sabha passes the bill regarding the Uniform Civil Code, a similar bill will be brought in two other states namely Gujarat and Assam. Sources in the party claim that the Uniform Civil Code will be implemented in three states before the Lok Sabha elections.



**Mumbai Urdu News** (January 19) states that in a meeting of All India Muslim Personal Law Board organised in Hyderabad, a decision has been taken to oppose the plan to implement Uniform Civil Code in the country. In a resolution adopted in the meeting of the board, it has been stated that the board had clarified in the past itself that it would not be appropriate to implement Uniform Civil Code in a multi-religious and multi-cultural country like Bharat. If any such effort is being made, it would be against the sentiments of the Constitution. The Constitution had given guarantee to the minorities to practice their religious beliefs and the government does not make any kind of interference in it. If the Uniform Civil Code is implemented in the country, then it will be an open violation of this guarantee.

Jamiat Ulema also in its executive meeting has decided to oppose any effort to implement Uniform Civil Code in the country. In a resolution adopted at a meeting of the executive of Jamiat Ulema in Deoband, it has been stated that the Law Commission had clearly directed the government that it may not be appropriate to make efforts to implement Uniform Civil Code in the country. Jamiat Ulema said the government intends to use the Uniform Civil Code as a weapon in the forthcoming elections in order to amass the votes of the majority community, which is totally inappropriate. The chief of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen, Asaduddin

Owaisi, also described the efforts to implement Uniform Civil Code in the country is a major assault on the guarantee given to minorities in the Constitution and said that the minorities and adivasis should jointly oppose this.

**Taasir** (February 3) reports that the committee constituted by the Uttarakhand government to look into the Uniform Civil Code has handed over its report to Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama.

**Sahafat** (February 3) states that Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama said this report of the special committee has four volumes and 740 pages. He said that after discussing this issue in the next session of the state Assembly, it will be implemented in the entire state.

**Mumbai Urdu News** (February 3) states that the report prepared by the committee of experts to implement Uniform Civil Code in Uttarakhand will be discussed in the state cabinet, after which it will be presented in the special session of the state Assembly which will begin on February 6. The newspaper in its editorial on the same day said that a game has been started to divide the country's politics on communal basis on the pretext of Uniform Civil Code and to take political benefits from it. A fresh debate started over Uniform Civil Code when Prime Minister Modi, while addressing the workers of BJP in Bhopal on June 27, 2023, said if the Constitution of the country is for all





communities in the country, then how can every community has different-different laws. However, the BJP in its election manifesto in 2014 had also promised to implement the Uniform Civil Code. The truth is that the Uniform Civil Code is an important step towards realising the dream of a Hindu Rashtra, which the people of BJP have been waiting for a long time.

The newspaper said this issue has been set loose so that the Hindu votes should polarise on the side of BJP. The

most important issue is that the stand of neither the Central government, nor the Uttarakhand government is clear regarding the Shariah law. It looks like this issue will be used in the forthcoming elections to spread hatred against Muslims and to strengthen their own vote bank. On the pretext of this, attempts could be made to change the Shariah law and religion of Muslims and hence there

is a sense of unease among every Muslim in the country. The government's effort is to propagate among common Indian citizens that the Muslim community is stopping a good work. Muslim leaders, especially Muslim Personal Law Board, Jamiat Ulema, Jamaat-e-Islami and other Muslim organisations should be ready to prepare for a legal battle. They should also include the Sikhs and Adivasis of the country in this struggle.

## BJP's plan to get Muslim votes



**Roznama Sahara** (January 17) states that the BJP is trying hard to attract Muslim voters towards it in Uttar Pradesh. Now, only three months are left for Lok Sabha elections. The analysts of BJP say that in the elections held so far, the Muslim voters have kept themselves away from BJP and

hence this time the BJP doesn't want to leave any stone unturned to attract the Muslim voters towards it. From next month, the BJP's minority morcha will organise more than 100 community chaupals in Muslim majority areas. Under this campaign, special focus will be given





to Muslim majority village areas. The minority morcha will work like a bridge between the government and the Muslims.

The office-bearers of BJP's minority morcha claim that in this connection, lot of work has been done in the Muslim-majority Lok Sabha constituencies in Western Uttar Pradesh. Now the party will give more focus on Central Uttar Pradesh and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. For this, more than 4,000 Muslim-majority villages have been selected. In these places, the workers of the party will make house-to-house visits and provide detailed information regarding the programmes of the Modi government for the welfare of minorities. In all these villages, Muslim chaupals will also be organised. Here, information will be collected regarding the problems being faced by Muslims. Later, the Central and state governments will be contacted for resolution of these problems.

The newspaper said that currently the population of Muslims in Uttar Pradesh is nearly 20 per cent. Whereas, as per the Census of 2011, the population of Hindus in the state was nearly 80 per cent. That time the population of Muslims was 19 per cent. However, there are many such districts in Uttar Pradesh where the population of Muslims is very high. These districts include Moradabad, Rampur, Kairana, Bijnor etc. It is being said that the inclination of Muslims towards BJP is much low compared to other political parties. There are 80 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh. In 2014, the BJP registered victory in 71 seats among them. Whereas in 2019, the number of seats of the party came

down to 62. In the election in 2019, the Congress did not get the success that it expected. Only Sonia Gandhi managed to win from Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha seat. Whereas, Union Minister Smriti Irani defeated Rahul Gandhi in Amethi Lok Sabha seat. The BJP fears that due to the INDIA alliance, the Muslims will give more attention to Congress and hence special efforts have been started to attract Muslim voters towards the party.

**Roznama Sahara** (January 26) states that just three days after the *pran pratishtha* of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya, the BJP has started election campaign for Lok Sabha polls. National president of the party, J P Nadda, launched this campaign in the presence of Prime Minister Modi. In this occasion, the party's election campaign song, 'hum sapne nahi, hakikat bunte hai, tabhi to sab Modi ko chunte hai' was released. The Prime Minister also sought suggestions from the people to prepare the election manifesto. He urged the youths that they appear before the people as the backbone of the BJP. As part of this election campaign, Prime Minister Modi launched 46 development projects worth more than Rs 20,700 crore for Bulandshahr, Meerut, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Baghpat, Ghaziabad and Hapur.

**Inquilab** (January 26) reports that in order to sustain the wave that has formed in favour of Modi and BJP in the country due to the Ram Mandir pran pratishtha, a free 'teerth yatra' will be made available to lakhs of people across the country. In this connection, the workers of Sangh Parivar and BJP have been directed to bring more



than 50 lakh people for the darshan of the mandir in Ayodhya in the coming months. This programme will continue till April 17 or Ramnavami. Last week, national president of BJP J P Nadda had directed all the party MPs and MLAs that arrangements shall be made for the yatra of faithfuls across the country to visit the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. According to sources in BJP, a plan has been made to arrange the yatra of atleast 10,000 people from every constituency out of the total 543 Lok Sabha constituencies. This campaign will begin from next month.

**Jadeed Markaz** (January 28) published from Lucknow said that along with the *pran pratishtha* of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, the BJP has started the work to capitalise on the mandir issue. It is with this aim that it has started the work to reach Akshat or the Prasad to every household in the country. This apart, a plan has been made to bring believers from 450 districts in the country via 25 trains daily for the darshan of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya and later return them. The morale of BJP leaders is high due to these programmes. This is the reason why the party has given the slogan 'Third time Modi Sarkar, This time 400 plus.' Prime Minister Modi himself declares that in 1984, the Congress had secured 414 seats under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi. This time, he will break this record and register victory in 450 seats. The newspaper expressed doubts over this claim of Prime Minister Modi. The newspaper said that this time, apart from south, the BJP is weak in the east as well. In such a situation, from where will more

than 400 seats come from. The BJP looks strong in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Delhi, Haryana and Assam.

**Akhbar-e-Mashriq** (February 1) in its editorial said that after the construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, the BJP has changed its strategy and they are concerned about collecting the votes of Pasmada Muslims. Congress and Samajwadi Party say that the BJP has turned a religious issue into a political farce and its aim is to strengthen the Hindu vote. Its reaction will be such that the Muslims will oppose BJP everywhere and give their votes to the secular parties. From this it is clear that the parties which contest the elections understood the strength of the Muslim votes.

In Uttar Pradesh, the BJP's election campaign is starting with the title of 'Shukriya Modi Bhaijan.' Whereas in West Bengal, the title of this campaign will be 'Shukriya Modi Dada.' Similarly, in South India, the title of this campaign will be 'Shukriya Modi Anna.' Whereas in Maharashtra, the title of this campaign will be 'Shukriya Modi Bhau.' The parties which are part of the INDIA alliance are propagating that the Modi government is not secular. The government has spent 10 billion dollars for the Ram Mandir *pran pratishtha* ceremony and its publicity. The newspaper said the BJP has prepared its agenda for the Lok Sabha elections. It is very easy to collect votes by rousing the sentiments in the name of religion. The Modi government is also now playing this game.

## Pakistan and Iran attack each other with missiles



**Inquilab** (January 17) states that the Iranian military has attacked a border village in Pakistan's Balochistan province using missiles. Two children were killed and three others were injured in this attack. Pakistan's external affairs ministry expressed displeasure on this attack by Iran and announced the withdrawal of its Ambassador from Iran. Pakistan also announced that it would not hold any kind of talks with Iran in future. The current talks being held between the two countries have also been stopped.

After the attack on Pakistan using ballistic missiles, Iran's foreign affairs minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said they had targeted some terrorist bases in Pakistan. He said the terrorists have been attacking Iran for quite some time and their links are with Israel. Iran's defence minister Brigadier General Mohammad-Reza Gharaei Ashtiani said we will give a befitting reply to any kind of threat being poised against Iran at any point of time. It is our legal and legitimate right to protect our own territory. Iran claimed that two bases of Pakistani terrorist organisation Jaish Al-Adl were destroyed in the missile and drone attacks. Iranian news agency 'Tasnim' has confirmed that Iran attacked

Koh-e-Sabz region in Pakistan's Balochistan using missiles. This region is one of the biggest bases of terrorist organisation Jaish al-Adl.

Similarly, Iranian militia Pasdaran-e-Inquilab had fired 11 ballistic missiles on Erbil in Iraq's Kurdistan region on January 15. This organisation claimed that it had also targeted the bases of Israel's intelligence agency Mossad in Iraq. The organisation attacked Syria also using missiles the next day itself and claimed that it had destroyed the secret bases of ISIS there.

The Pakistan government accused Iran government of attacking its border without any reason and violating the sovereignty of Pakistan which cannot be tolerated under any circumstance. This apart, Pakistan has ordered the Iranian Ambassador in Pakistan to return to his country. Pakistan also stopped the talks being held between Pakistan and Iran regarding the Chabahar Port. Pakistan's foreign ministry said it will not send its representative to any talks with Iran in future.

According to foreign news agencies, Jaish Al-Adl is an Islamic terrorist organisation and it is strongly opposed to





Iran. This terrorist organisation is linked to Sunni Muslims. They claim that it is their Islamic duty to give a befitting reply to the torture unleashed on Sunnis by the Shia government of Iran in Sistan and Balochistan in Iran. It is to be noted that this terrorist organisation was founded in 2012. Earlier, this terrorist organisation was active on the Pakistan-Iran border in the name of Jundallah. In 2010, the Iran government had hanged to death the then chief of Jundallah, Abdolmalek Rigi, for taking part in terrorist activities. He was accused of triggering more than a dozen bomb blasts in the Iranian provinces of Sistan and Balochistan and also attacking the Iranian Army. It was also claimed that Rigi was an agent of the US and Britain and he wanted to destabilise the Islamic government in Iran.

**Mumbai Urdu News** (January 18) states that the spokesperson of Pakistan's foreign ministry, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, said the entire responsibility for this attack rests with Iran and Iran is now making false allegations about the bases of Jaish-al-Adl in order to hide its aggression. It is to be noted that Sunni terrorist organisation ISIS triggered two blasts in Iran recently in which more than 200 people were killed. Iran's official news agency 'IRNA' had claimed that missiles and drones made in Pakistan were used in this attack. Jaish al-Adl or the Army of Justice is active on the border region between Iran and Pakistan. Iran government had accused this Sunni terrorist organisation that it had triggered more than a dozen blasts in Iran and had

also kidnapped many employees of Iranian police. A spokesperson of Pakistani Army said that a masjid located in Balochistan's Panjgur district was also damaged in the Iranian attack.

**Hamara Samaj** (January 19) states that a day after Iran launched an attack on Pakistan, Pakistan too attacked many places in the Iranian provinces of Sistan and Balochistan using missiles as a retaliatory step. The Iranian media has confirmed that nine persons including three

women and four children were killed in this attack. Pakistan has claimed that it has targeted the bases of those Iran-based terrorists who have been using the land of Iran to carry out terrorist attacks on Pakistan. According to Iranian media, the citizens who were killed in the Pakistani attack do not belong to Iran. Whereas the spokesperson of Pakistan's foreign ministry said the attacks that targeted terrorist bases were decided on the basis of the information received from intelligence sources and many terrorists were killed in this attack. Pakistan has named this military operation as 'Marg Bar Sarmachar'. A spokesperson of Pakistan government said these terrorists have been shedding the blood of innocent Pakistanis by targeting Pakistani territory from their bases in Iran. The spokesperson said this operation was quite complicated, but the Pakistani Army efficiently executed it. The Pakistan's foreign ministry refused to provide more information regarding this operation.

**Hamara Samaj** (January 19) states that the Pakistani military used five kinds of weapons for its attack on Iran. They included drones, rockets, missiles and most modern weapons. Pakistan also claimed that the terrorist organisations that the Pakistani military had targeted include the Balochistan Liberation Army and Balochistan Liberation Front.

**Urdu Times** (January 18) states that a spokesperson of China appealed to Pakistan and Iran to maintain patience and

said that China will make all possible efforts to remove the misunderstandings that have arisen between its two friends. The Chinese spokesperson said that China is also ready to mediate between the two countries.

**Roznama Sahara** (January 19) states that Afghanistan and Turkiye also appealed to both the countries to be patient.

**Siasat** (January 21) states that after the Pakistani attack, Iran has activated its air defence system. It has also conducted a military exercise for two days on its region bordering Pakistan. According to Iranian media, Iran's air force, navy and aerospace force took part in this exercise.

**Siasat** (January 19) states that a spokesperson of Pakistan's military headquarters said that the Pakistani Army is fully prepared and on high alert. If Iran takes any offensive action, it will be given a befitting reply. Pakistan will not compromise with any foreign power on the issue of its security and national interests. The spokesperson said that Iran is, however, our neighbouring country and brotherly nation and we want to keep a friendly relationship with all countries. Russia has advised the governments of Pakistan and Iran not to become victims of any provocative action taken by foreign powers.

**Siasat** (January 3) states that the tension between Pakistan and Iran has come down and both the countries have directed their respective Ambassadors to get back to work again.

**Hamara Samaj** (January 19) states that Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan has condemned the attack by Iran and held the current rulers of Pakistan responsible for the tension between the two countries.

**Mumbai Urdu News** (January 18) states that a spokesperson of Indian government described the Iranian military action in Pakistan as its internal matter. The



spokesperson said that India has been keeping a close eye on the situation and this attack by Iran has proved that Pakistan has become a base for terrorists.

**Urdu Times** (January 29) states that the efforts being made to reduce the tension between Pakistan and Iran have suffered a huge setback due to an incident that took place recently. According to Iranian media, three unidentified assailants attacked Pakistani labourers working in Iran and killed nine of them. Iran government has announced that the investigation into this attack is being conducted by the intelligence agencies of Iran and the accused would be arrested soon.

**Siasat** (January 19) in its editorial expressed concern over the incident. The newspaper said that the hands of the US and Western nations were behind this incident. The newspaper demanded that both the countries should joint take action to wipe out terrorism.

**Etemaad** (January 19) in its editorial has accepted that the tension between the Shias and Sunnis is increasing. It is definitely condemnable the way people belonging to both the communities are killing the innocent people of the other community. Since 2008, a Sunni terrorist organisation, Jundallah, has been targeting the Iranian Army. This organisation has targeted many senior officers of Iranian Army and police officers. The Iran government claims that it has indicated about this terrorist organisation to Pakistan government many times but Pakistan has failed to take any credible step against this

organisation. Hence Iran itself had to take action against these terrorists. The Pakistan government has rejected the charge of Iranian government that Pakistan's territory is being used to spill the blood of innocent people in Iran. The newspaper said that may be because terrorist organisation ISIS had killed many innocent people in Iran recently, Iran also had to target the terrorist bases in Pakistan.

**Hamara Samaj** (January 19) in its editorial has urged Iran to remain patient and do not take any such action which will increase tension in this region.

**Urdu Times** (January 18) in its editorial said the relationship between

Pakistan and Iran has been friendly right from the beginning. The newspaper expressed doubt that though Jaish al-Adl claims to be fighting for the independence of Balochistan, but in reality they enjoy the support of the US. The newspaper claimed that the way in which Iran has openly challenged the US during the war between Israel and Hamas, the US has taken the help of this organisation to take revenge on it.

**Hindustan Express** (January 21) has expressed concern over the increasing tension between Iran and Pakistan and stressed that both the countries should take immediate steps to end tension. ■

## Mandatory for women to get married to take up jobs in Afghanistan



**Etemaad** (January 24) reports that the Taliban government in Afghanistan has put up a new condition on women interested in taking up employment in the country. A spokesperson of Afghan government said that permission will not be granted to unmarried women to take up jobs. If any woman is interested in taking up employment, then she has to get married first. In Islamic shariah, there is a ban on any unmarried woman from socialising with men or working with them in the same office. It is to be noted that after coming to power in August 2021, the Taliban government in Afghanistan has imposed different kinds of restrictions on women

and girls. As per these restrictions, no girl can study beyond Class VI. The women will be arrested if they appear in public places without wearing hijab or burqa and it is mandatory for them to wear the prescribed Islamic dress as per Shariah. In this dress, no body part of her should be seen outside and the entire body should be covered in burqa. This apart, there is a ban on women from visiting beauty parlour.

In the report of the United Nations Aid Mission in Afghanistan, it is being said that the Taliban administration is taking action against unmarried women. Recently, three women health workers were arrested because they were going for duty without being accompanied by their male relatives. The Taliban had also ordered that no woman can go to a hospital or dispensary and take treatment. As per the report of the United Nations Aid Mission, the police raided several places in Afghanistan last month and arrested those women who were travelling in buses unaccompanied by male relatives. This apart, many dozen bus drivers were also



arrested because they allowed these women to travel in their buses. These women are now in jail. A few dozen women were also arrested for purchasing anti-pregnancy tablets. This apart, more than 100 men were also taken into custody on charges of purchasing condom. Taliban government says that using anti-pregnancy methods are against Islam and Shariah.

Commenting on this report of the United Nations, chief spokesperson of Taliban, Zabiullah Mujahid, said the report had been prepared by those people in an arbitrary manner who do not have any

information regarding Islam or Shariah. He alleged that the United Nations is making undue interference in Islamic law and Shariah. Mujahid said that since there is a fundamentalist Islamic rule prevailing in Afghanistan, it is mandatory for the government to impose Shariah law on all men and women. If any foreign organisation interferes in our religion or in its laws, then they will not be allowed to work in this country. He said that the Western nations are deliberately interfering in Shariah and giving a bad name to Islam and Shariah across the world.

## Mass murder of barbers by extremists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



**Avadhnama** (January 4) states that Islamic terrorists have publically killed six barbers in Mir Ali locality in North Waziristan district. It is to be noted that the Mir Ali town is on Pakistan-Afghanistan border. According to local police chief Jamal Khan, no organisation has taken

responsibility for the killings so far. However, it is assumed that the hands of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan were behind this massacre, which is said to be linked to the ruling Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Nearly a month ago, these Islamic terrorists had issued a diktat saying that if any person cuts his beard or hair in a foreign style will be killed.

It is being said that last month these terrorists had killed two school teachers because they trimmed their beard. It is being said that the terrorists had killed all the barbers in Mir Ali town because in future no Muslim will cut his beard or hair by violating the Islamic Shariah.

## Campaign against mysterious disappearance of Baloch leaders

**Avadhnama** (January 29) states that the Pakistani intelligence agencies are kidnapping separatist Baloch leaders and killing them. Baloch Yakjehti Committee has organised a mass protest for one month in Islamabad in order to create public opinion against these murders. After the conclusion of this protest, Baloch leader

Mahrang Baloch, while addressing a public meeting in Quetta, said that it is extremely worrying the way the Pakistani intelligence agencies made disappear those students and leaders who are protesting against the economic exploitation of Chinese in Balochistan. These agencies are throwing away the bodies of Baloch activists on



roads after killing them at the behest of Pakistan government. This has been taking place for the past two years. Till now, more than 10,000 Baloch activists have disappeared under mysterious circumstances. In this connection, the Baloch leaders had even knocked at the doors the courts, but the intelligence agencies have flatly refused to take any responsibility for these mysterious murders.

Mahrang Baloch said that in the protest held at Islamabad, it had been demanded that the Baloch activists who were taken into custody by the intelligence agencies in an illegal manner shall be produced in the court so that legal action could be taken against those responsible for the murders. He said that recently, the body of a prominent Baloch leader, Balach Mola Bakhsh, was found on a road in Islamabad. This Baloch leader had disappeared under mysterious circumstances nearly a month ago. He said that the anti-terrorism organisation is responsible for these murders. The protesters had demanded that a judicial inquiry shall be conducted into the mysterious disappearances of the people, but the Pakistani rulers did not accept this demand by them.

In a news published in this newspaper on January 11, it has been claimed that the Baloch separatist campaign suffered a setback after the surrender of the chief of Baloch National Army Sarfraz Bangulzai. This organisation was founded in January 2022. Within a

year, more than 2,000 people belonging to this organisation have been arrested by the intelligence agencies of Pakistan. In September 2022, the then chief of Baloch Nationalist Army, Gulzar Imam, was arrested by Turkiye government and handed over to Pakistani security agencies. Following this, serious differences arose between the different leaders of Baloch Nationalist Army.

Majority of the leaders of this organisation cut off their relationship with the organisation and joined the Baloch Liberation Front of Allah Nazar Baloch and Baloch Liberation Army of Bashir Zeb.

It is to be noted that Sarfraz Bangulzai along with 70 of his colleagues surrendered before the caretaker home minister of Balochistan Zubair Jamali in Quetta on December 20, 2023. Speaking to reporters in this connection, Bangulzai alleged that Baloch separatist organisations enjoy the support of neighbouring countries Bharat and Afghanistan. The separatist organisations are targeting Pakistani Army and police at the behest of foreign organisations. He appealed to Baloch separatist leaders who have taken refuge abroad that they surrender before the Pakistan government in order to increase the pace of development in Balochistan. The Pakistan government has assured him that the separatist leaders who surrender will be treated leniently.

Fiftyfive-year-old Sarfraz Bangulzai had claimed that he belongs to Mastung district in Quetta. He was a government employee in Balochistan during 1991-2009. Later he joined the separatist organisation of Hyrbair Marri, Balochistan Liberation Army. Later, due to differences with Marri, he joined a new separatist organisation named United Baloch Army (UBA). Bangulzai said that he had a role in a number of attacks carried out against Pakistani Army and the police. He alleged that the leaders of UBA stay

abroad and with the cooperation of foreign agencies of neighbouring countries, running an anti-government campaign in Balochistan. He also said that currently the chief of separatist Baloch organisation Baloch Republican Army is Brahumdagh Bugti, who is the grandson of prominent

leader of Baloch rebels, Nawab Akbar Bugti. He also alleged in the press conference that the relations of Brahumdagh Bugti is with the governments of neighbouring countries and he acts as their puppet and plays Holi with the blood of government officials in Balochistan.

## Principal summoned to court over students offering namaz in Britain



**Roznama Sahara** (January 18) reports that in Britain, a school principal has stopped students from offering namaz on school premises. As per a report of Al Arabia, a Muslim student of the school filed a petition before the high court in Britain. In this petition, a demand has been made to cancel the decision to ban namaz on the premises of the school and also sought legal action against the principal for interfering in religious issues. It is to be noted that Michaela Community School is

located in Brant region in northern London. This school is run by Katharine Birbalsingh. The school principal says that granting permission to do namaz on school premises is against the school rules and hence she had stopped students from offering namaz. Following this incident, the Islamic extremists are constantly threatening to kill her.

The school principal says that 30 Muslim students started offering namaz on school premises in March 2023. They used the school uniform to kneel and prostrate. This is because the school managers did not give permission to bring the carpet in order to offer namaz, hence the principal stopped them from offering namaz on school premises. Lawyer for the students Sara Hanet said that stopping anybody from offering namaz is an interference in their religious belief and it is an open violation of the British policy. She said that as per British Constitution, every individual has the permission to worship as per his belief.



## Iran attacks Israeli, US bases located in Iraq



**Inqilab** (January 17) reports that Iran has claimed that its military had attacked the headquarters of Israel's intelligence agency Mossad, the US Consulate and the bases of Kurd rebels in Iraq using ballistic missiles. Similarly, attacks were carried out on the bases of ISIS in Syria as well. According to official sources in Iran, the attacks were carried out by Iranian militia Pasdaran-e-Inqilab. Iran's official news agency claimed that Iran had targeted the headquarters of Israel's intelligence agency Mossad and also the military bases of anti-Iran forces in Erbil in Iraq. This attack was carried out in retaliation against the bloodbath of hundreds of Iranians in Kerman by Islamic terrorist organisation ISIS at the behest of US. Iraq's Kurdistan Security Council has accepted that more than two dozen Kurds were killed in Iran's missile attacks. Whereas, Kurdistan Democratic Party also confirmed this attack.

It is to be noted that on the occasion of the death anniversary of General Qasem Soleimani on January 3, nearly 200 Iranian citizens were killed in an ISIS suicide attack that took place on his mazar. The US has condemned Iran for the attacks in Erbil city in Iraq and said that a befitting reply will be given for it. As per another news, Iraq has withdrawn its Ambassador

in Iran, Nasir Abdel Mohsin, in protest against Iranian attacks in the country. This apart, Iran-supported armed militia organisations carried out attacks on the US military base Conoco in Syria. It has been claimed that more than 100 US soldiers were killed in this attack.

**Roznama Sahara** (January 22) reports that Iran's military advisor Hojjatollah Omidvar, Ali Aghazadeh, Hossein Mohammadi and Saeed Karimi were killed in an Israeli attack during a meeting of senior officials of Pasdaran-e-Inqilab in Syrian capital Damascus. British intelligence sources confirmed that at least a dozen senior officials of Iran were killed in this Israeli attack.

**Inqilab** (January 22) reports that Iran President Ebrahim Raisi has announced that Iran will take revenge for the death of the senior officials who were killed in Israeli attack. In another attack, the Israeli military targeted a car in south Lebanon in which two senior commanders of Hamas were killed. However, though Hamas has confirmed the death of the two, but did not announce their names.

**Etemaad** (January 25) states that the US military attacked the military bases of Iran-supported militia group in Iraq. This attack was carried out as retaliation for the attack by Iran.

## Talks between India, Iran over Chabahar port project



**Inqilab** (January 16) states that Bharat's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held a meeting with Iran minister Mehrdad Bazzargan in Tehran. It is being said that a positive discussion took place regarding a long-term cooperation on Chabahar port project and other issues. It is to be noted that India has been stressing on holding talks with Iran once again regarding the Chabahar project. In this connection, India's external affairs minister held a lengthy discussion with the foreign minister of Iran as well. This apart, detailed talks were held between the two leaders regarding the blockade by Houthi rebels in Red Sea and also about the attacks launched against them by the alliance led by the US.

**Etemaad** (January 18) in its editorial said that the growing influence of China and Russia in the Middle-East has suffered a major jolt due to a fresh turn in the politics of the region. Now, the influence of the US has once again gone up in the region. The importance of the visit of India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to Iran at a time when the Houthi rebels have been targeting the ships of Israel and its allied countries in the Red Sea cannot be overlooked. He has stressed on further strengthening the relationship

between the two countries. It is being said that this visit of India's Foreign Minister is aimed at putting pressure on Iran to stop the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea. Meanwhile, there is a danger of the war between Israel and Hamas spreading to other countries in the Middle-East. In this connection, the role of Iran is very important. It has been accused of not only extending financial and military aid to Hamas, Hezbollah and Houthi rebels, these organisations also take actions as per its directions. There is diplomatic and trade relationship between India and Iran. Among them, the North-South Transport Corridor and Chabahar Project are important.

It is to be noted that his visit to Iran has acquired more importance after the talks between S Jaishankar and US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken. Iran has not only got support from China and Russia, it is very powerful on its own. Its influence in Iraq and Syria cannot be ignored. In view of the tension that has arisen in the relationship between Pakistan and Iran recently, the visit of India's foreign minister to Iran assumes greater significance.

**Background:** The Chabahar port is situated near to Pakistan's Gwadar port.

The Gwadar port was developed recently by China for Pakistan. Chabahar is important both for India and Iran. India's effort is to see that it establishes direct contact with Afghanistan through this trade corridor. This port is also related to the proposed International North-South Transport Corridor. India's participation in the development of Chabahar port started in the year 2002. In this connection, the then National Security Advisor of Iran Hassan Rouhani started talks with the then National Security Advisor of India Brajesh Mishra. Following this, the then President of Iran Syed Mohammad Khatami came on a visit to India and he had held lengthy talks with the then Prime Minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee regarding the Chabahar port.



This apart, an agreement was also signed between Iran and India to develop this port.

For India, this project has also assumed greater importance because China has started developing Gwadar port for

Pakistan. An agreement was also signed in 2016 between India, Afghanistan and Iran in order to develop Chabahar port on a rapid pace. In 2017, the first phase of Shahid Beheshti port was inaugurated and in this year, India sent the first batch of wheat to Afghanistan through Chabahar. Due to the worsening relationship between Iran and the US, there was not much progress in the project as envisaged. Recently, in view of the tension that has arisen between Iran and Pakistan, one can expect the beginning of a new chapter between Iran and India regarding the Chabahar project.

## OIC condemns inauguration of Ram temple in Ayodhya



**Sahafat** (January 25) reports that the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has condemned the construction of Ram Mandir and the *pran pratishtha* of Ram Lalla at the spot where the 500-year-old Babri Masjid was razed on December 6,

1992. In a statement, OIC said it was a matter of great concern that Ram Mandir was constructed at the place in Ayodhya city in India where the Babri Masjid once stood and the *pran pratishtha* of Ram Lalla was conducted and we strongly condemn





this. It is to be noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had inaugurated the Ram Mandir built in Ayodhya on January 22. On the next day itself, the OIC has condemned in strong terms the construction of Ram Mandir on the spot of masjid. In its statement, the OIC said that in the last meeting of the council of foreign ministers of OIC, this step of Indian government was condemned. Its aim is to wipe out important Islamic places like Babri Masjid. The Babri Masjid was standing on that spot for the past five centuries, where the Ram Mandir is being constructed now.

**Comment:** OIC is an organisation of Muslim nations and a total of 57 countries are its members. OIC is dominated by Saudi Arabia. However, Saudi Arabia is not among the top 10 nations in the world where the Muslim population is the highest. Despite it, since the two holiest places of Muslims namely Mecca and Medina are in Saudi Arabia, it holds an important place in the Muslim world. However, on the count of Muslim population, though Bharat is among the top three countries along with Pakistan and Indonesia, India is not a member of OIC. According to US organisation 'Pew Research,' by 2060, the world's largest Muslim population will be in Bharat and Pakistan will be in second position.

It is worth mentioning that in 2006, when King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia arrived on a visit to India, he had said that India should get observer status in OIC, but Pakistan had opposed it. Earlier in 1969, India had taken

part in the OIC meeting held in Morocco capital Rabat regarding the Al-Aqsa masjid in Jerusalem. That time, India's President was Zakir Hussain. Then Saudi Arabia had said that this was not an issue of Muslim countries, but an issue of all Muslims in the world. On the basis of this, despite opposition from Pakistan, India was extended an invitation. The interesting thing is that the Indian delegation had even addressed the meeting.

The Indian delegation which was sent to take part in the Rabat meeting was headed by then Union Minister Fakhruddin Ali Ahmad. Later, the Indian delegation had to return from the Rabat meeting midway because the then President of Pakistan General Yahya Khan had threatened that if India takes part in the meeting, then Pakistan will boycott the meeting. Following this, tension arose in the relationship between Bharat and OIC. As per the charter of the OIC, only those Muslims nations interested in promoting the aim of the organisation shall be given membership. Despite this, Russia was included as an observer in 2005. In 1998, Thailand was also given the status of observer though it was a Buddhist-majority nation.

OIC is dominated by Pakistan and that is why this organisation openly supports the stand of Pakistan. OIC states that the Kashmiris should get the right for self-determination. Similarly, when the Indian government abrogated Article 370 of the Constitution, the OIC passed a formal resolution and condemned it and described it as a unilateral decision by the Indian government. Similarly, when a court in Bharat awarded life-term to separatist leader in Kashmir Yasin Malik, the OIC condemned even that as well. The OIC even took strong objection to the statement of former BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma on the Prophet. It said that the increasing hatred against Muslims and the effort to give a bad name to Islam are part of a well-

planned campaign. However, the Indian government had always rejected the Pakistan-supporting stand adopted by the OIC.

The construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya and the *pran pratishtha* of Ram Lalla had been condemned by Pakistan as well. In a statement, the foreign ministry of Pakistan said the construction of Ram Mandir at the place of Babri Masjid with the cooperation of the Indian government and the *pran pratishtha* of Ram Lalla at the hands of Prime Minister Modi points to the growing majoritarianism in the country. This also shows an effort to marginalise Indian Muslims both at political and social level. The Ram Mandir, which was built at the spot of the demolished masjid, will remain as a stain on the democracy of Bharat for a long time. Pakistan's foreign ministry said the list of many masjids like the Gyanvapi in Varanasi and the Shahi Idgah in Mathura are increasing, which are likely to be razed like the Babri.

The most interesting thing is that a few years ago, tension arose between Saudi Arabia and Turkiye over the leadership of OIC. Turkiye had organised a meeting of OIC in Malaysia, which was boycotted by 17 nations including Saudi Arabia. As a reply to this meeting, Saudi Arabia had called a parallel meeting of OIC in Rabat, in which 37 countries took part. Pakistan was the only such country which took part in both the meetings. However, due to the pressure from Islamic world, the mutual differences between the two countries subsided but despite this, the differences between the two countries often prop up over the issue of leadership of OIC.

Saudi Arabia claims that since the two holiest places of Muslims namely Mecca and Medina are under its control, it has every right to take over the leadership of Islamic countries. Whereas, Turkiye claims that it is the traditional successor to the Islamic Caliphate. It is to be noted that



till 1924, the headquarters of Khilafat-e-Usmania was in Turkiye and Mecca and Medina were under the control of the Sharif appointed by Khilafat-e-Usmania. In 1924, due to pressure from the British, the then President of Turkiye, Kemal Attaturk alias Mustafa Kemal Pasha, brought a resolution in the National Assembly of Turkey and ended the Khilafat-e-Usmania and announced the establishment of a democratic setup in Turkiye.

Later, the last Caliph, Abdul Majeed II, was expelled along with his family from Turkiye and he had to take refuge in France. Abdul Majeed had no sons. He only had a daughter, Durrushehvar Sultan. The mind of the Seventh Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Usman Ali Khan, got possessed by the desire of becoming the Caliph of the Muslims and that is why he solemnised the nikah of his son Prince Azam Shah with the only daughter of the last Caliph, Durrushehvar. Since the British did not like the controversy over the Islamic Caliphate raked up again, they put pressure on the Nizam and the Nizam had to abandon his plan to make his son as the Islamic Caliph.

Here it is also worth mentioning that in the First World War, the Caliph of Turkey was an ally of Germany. That time, the entire Middle-East was part of Khilafat-e-Usmania and the Saudi Arabian cities of Mecca and Medina were also in its control. The British put pressure on Kemal Attaturk and ended the regime of Khilafat-e-Usmania because they did not want the Caliph to join any of its enemy country and become a headache for them in future. This

is the reason why as per the agreement signed after the First World War, the Islamic Caliphate was divided into 25 countries and Britain enthroned its

supporters as the rulers of these countries. The administration of Saudi Arabia was handed over to the Saud family, who still enjoy the power in Saudi Arabia. ■

## Preparations on to open liquor shops in Saudi Arabia

**Roznama Sahara** (January 25) reports that preparations are on to open the first liquor shop in Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh. Currently, only non-Muslim diplomats are sold liquor from this shop. According to British news agency 'Reuters,' for the first time in the history of Saudi Arabia, permission is being granted for the sale of liquor in the country. The sale of liquor has special importance in the 'Vision 2030' formulated by Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman in order to provide more strength to the economy of Saudi Arabia. It is being said that the permission granted to sale of liquor in Saudi Arabia will help in promotion of foreign tourism. According to official sources in Saudi Arabia, those interested in buying liquor need to register with an app named 'diplo,' and after getting permission from the foreign ministry, a monthly quota will be allocated for the consumers. In places where the new outlets of liquor are being opened, they will be located in those areas of the capital where the embassies of various countries

are located. Till now it is not clear whether other non-Muslim non-residents will have the permission to purchase the liquor or not?

It is worth mentioning that in Saudi Arabia, even now there is a stringent law against drinking liquor or stocking it. This law has the provision to punish the guilty with lashing, fine or jail-term apart from expulsion from Saudi Arabia. Following the liberal policy that Saudi Arabia adopted recently, the punishment by lashing has been converted as jail term. It is said that Saudi Arabia will be opening its doors for non-religious tourists as well and permission has been granted to organise music programmes in public places. The Saudi government claims that in order to encourage foreign companies to make investments in Saudi Arabia, it is necessary that a liberal policy be adopted on the issue of the food of the employees working in these companies. Due to this, the Saudi citizens working in foreign companies will also get new job opportunities. ■

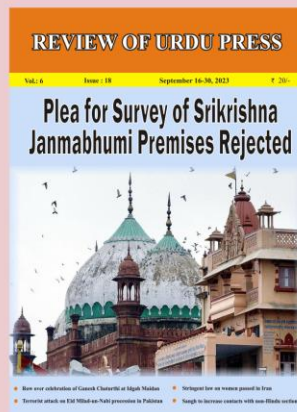
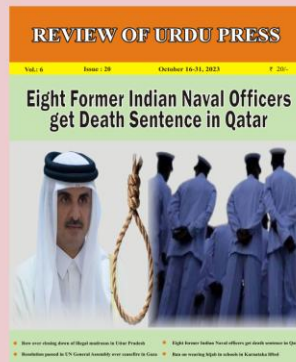
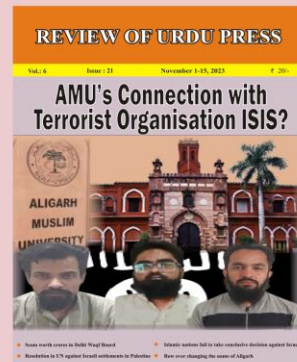
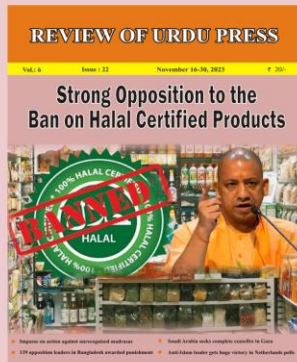
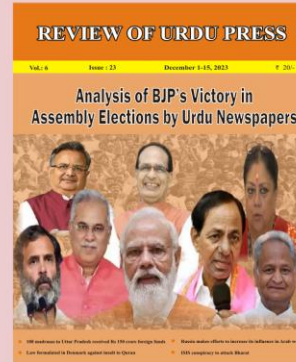
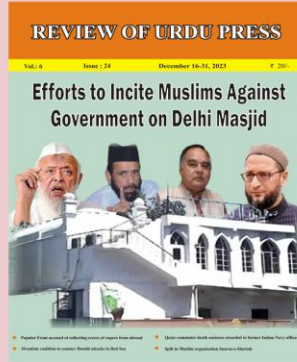
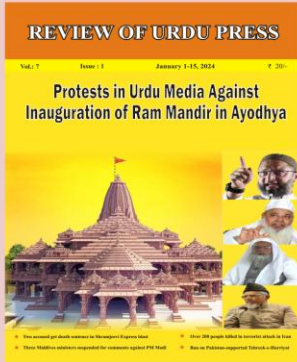
## US confirms sale of F-16 fighter planes to Turkiye

**Inquilab** (January 28) reports that the US has approved the sale of F-16 fighter planes to Turkiye. This issue remained buried for a long time. The US has decided to sell 40 F-16 fighter planes to Turkiye, and its cost is 23 billion dollars. This deal includes 79 modern kits of F-16. This part, according to the US State department, the US Congress has also approved the sale of 40 F-35 fighter planes to Greece which is said to be worth 8.6 billion dollars.

As per media report, Turkiye had requested for these fighter planes for the first time in 2020, but since Turkiye did to

permit the entry of Sweden to NATO, the issue remained in the backburner. That time, while opposing Sweden from becoming a member of NATO, Turkiye had said that the Swedish government had been supporting Kurd separatists. Last week, the Turkish Parliament approved Sweden from becoming a member of NATO and later President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had also signed the agreement. Following this decision, US President Joe Biden had said that now permission will be granted to sell these fighter planes to Turkiye. ■





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