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Insulting Vande Mataram Now a Punishable Offence



- Stay on the demolition of Mohammad Ali Jauhar University
- Communal riots after attack on Kanwar Yatra in Nepal
- Hamas in agreement with Gaza Board of Peace
- Opposition to Anti-Radicalisation Cell in Gujarat

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Summary

The Parliament has passed a bill, as per which anyone who deliberately insults 'Vande Mataram' or creates obstructions in its singing will be punished with a jail term of three years and a fine. Now, national song 'Vande Mataram' has been included in the category of national flag, Constitution and the national anthem, and anyone insulting it will get a punishment stringent than earlier. It is to be noted that a section of Muslims has been opposing Vande Mataram right from the beginning. Their claim is that this song is against their religious principles and that nobody could be forced to sing the song.

The court of divisional commissioner in Moradabad has ordered an interim stay on the direction to demolish the 38 buildings of Mohammad Ali Jauhar University. Earlier, the Rampur Development Authority had issued demolition notices to 38 out of 40 buildings on the university campus, terming them illegally constructed without approved plans. The Opposition parties and Muslim organisations strongly opposed this administrative action. It is to be noted that senior leader of Samajwadi Party and former minister Azam Khan constructed this university after flouting all the laws. In the past days, during a detailed investigation conducted by government officials, it was also confirmed that the land of farmers was forcibly seized in order to construct this university.

The Gujarat Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) conducted raids in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh and took into custody more than a dozen terrorists. These terrorists are linked to Pakistani terrorist organisation Jaish-e-Mohammad. After finding out about this gang, the state's intelligence wing and the police decided to set up an Anti-Radicalisation Cell in every district in the state in order to wipe out future terrorist activities in the state. The surprising thing is that the Urdu newspapers are opposing this decision of the government, which is connected to the national security. These newspapers allege that the ruling party is deliberately targeting the Muslims.

The flames of communal riots have spread in the Hindu majority country of Nepal. As per media reports, a procession of Kanwar Yatra was passing near a mosque playing DJ music. A few people in masjid objected to it, following which a dispute arose over playing loud music and carrying religious flags between the two sides. It is said that largescale stone-pelting took place, which soon took a violent turn. In order to control the situation, the police opened fire, in which three persons died and 16 others were injured. As soon as news about this incident spread, the flames of communal riots spread in the Terai region of Nepal. In order to control the situation, not only curfew was imposed, the responsibility for security had to be handed over to the army and the armed police of Nepal. In order to stop these riots from spreading to Indian localities, security had been tightened along the India-Nepal border. For the past few years, the influence of Islamic fundamentalists has been growing in this locality. Several religious organisations had asked the Nepal government to declare Nepal once again as a Hindu nation.

Hamas, the terrorist organisation active in Gaza, has announced its decision to welcome the 20-point 'Gaza Board of Peace' agreement mooted by US President Donald Trump. Due to the stringent stand of the US, the Hamas had to disarm and completely withdraw from the administration of Gaza. Israel announced that if Hamas hands over their weapons to any international agencies, it would withdraw its troops from Gaza so that the responsibility for the administration of Gaza could be handed over to an independent technical authority. The US President had assured to provide international funds for the reconstruction and the development of Gaza.

National

Insulting Vande Mataram now a punishable offence



Inquilab (July 30) states that the the Parliament has declared it a legal offence to cause any kind of disruption or insult to the singing of the national song 'Vande Mataram', just like the national song 'Jana Gana Mana'. A provision has been made to award a jail term of up to three years and a fine for insulting Vande Mataram. Amid a walkout by the Opposition leaders in the Rajya Sabha, the 'Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Act, 2026' has been passed with voice vote.

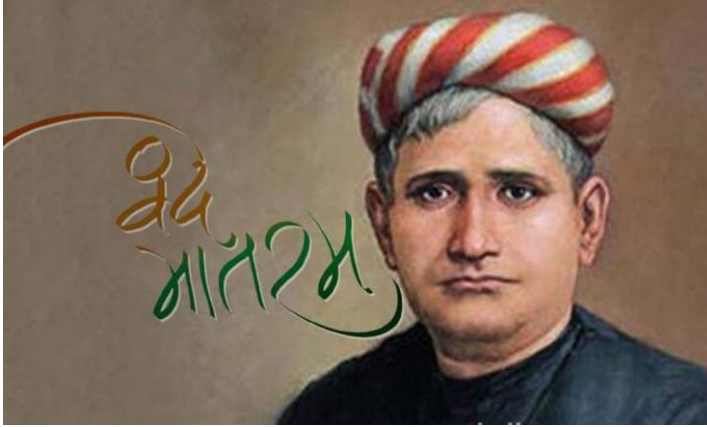
As soon as the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha began, Deputy Chairman Harivansh started the debate on the bill in the House. During this time, the Opposition parties created a huge ruckus in the House over the absence of Home Minister Amit Shah and staged a walkout from the House over the issue.

Replying to the debate in the Bill, Union Minister of State for Home Nityananad Rai said this was not just a simple legal amendment, instead it demonstrates the strong resolve and respect of the government towards the freedom fighters and national symbols of the country. He alleged that the leaders of

Congress had opposed Vande Mataram in the past as well. In the year 1937, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru became the president of Congress, and during his period this song has been limited to just the first two stanzas. Under the new law, it has been made clear that just like insulting the national flag, constitution and the national anthem is a punishable offence, now all the same rules will be equally applicable to the national song 'Vande Mataram'.

Urdu Times (July 31) reports that the Lok Sabha has also passed this Bill. Now the Bill will be sent to the President. After getting the assent from the President, it will be published in the official gazette of the country, after which it will be implemented across the country.

Hindustan (August 1) states that All India Muslim Personal Law Board opposed granting legal status to Vande Mataram. The board said this is against the secular and democratic principles of the Constitution and is an attack on the religious freedom of the citizens. Spokesperson of the board Syed Qasim Rasool Illyas said the effort to forcibly impose it on the Muslims is against the



Constitutional values. This song is not in tune with the 'Only one Allah' principle of Muslims. He also said the Supreme Court had made it clear that no individual could be forced to sing any song.

Mumbai Urdu News (August 1) in its editorial, while opposing the law, wrote that the law that has been passed in the Parliament is against the religious freedom being granted to Muslims in the Constitution. In Islam, the concept of 'Tawhid' is mandatory, as per which no

Muslim could worship anyone other than Allah. It is said in the editorial that the Supreme Court had made it clear in several occasions that no individual could be forced to sing any song or take part in any event where the singing of any particular song is mandatory. The newspaper has written that the Vande Mataram is an important part of freedom struggle and it should be respected, but no one should be forced to sing it.

Inquilab (August 5) has published an article written by Abdul Hameed Nomani in which it has been alleged that the purpose of the law created by the government is to keep Muslims away from Islam and the Prophet. It has been said in the article that the current government is trying to forcibly include Muslims in the majority community, which is against the basic sentiments of the Indian Constitution.

Stay on the demolition of Mohammad Ali Jauhar University

Inquilab (July 28) reports that the dream project of senior Samajwadi Party leader and former minister Azam Khan, 'Mohammad Ali Jauhar University' may have got a major relief. The court of the divisional commissioner in Moradabad has issued an interim stay on the orders of the Rampur Development Authority and the District Magistrate in which 38 out of the 40 buildings have been declared illegal and to demolish them. On the other hand, the Allahabad High Court rejected the petition of the Mohammad Ali Jauhar Trust saying that the court of the divisional commissioner has already issued an interim stay and hence there may not be any need for the court to intervene.

It is to be noted that the Rampur Development Authority, while taking action under Section 27 of Uttar Pradesh Town Plan and Development Act, 1973,

declared 38 out of 40 buildings as illegal and ordered their demolition. According to the Authority, permission was obtained for the construction of just two buildings from the then Zilla Panchayat, but subsequently, no approved building plans were obtained from any competent agency for the construction of the remaining 38 buildings.

In protest against this order, thousands of students launched a protest and an indefinite dharna on the University premises. This apart, the management filed an appeal before the court of Moradabad divisional commissioner and sought his intervention, on which the divisional commissioner conducted a hearing and has ordered an interim stay.

Pro-Vice Chancellor of Jauhar University and the wife of Azam Khan, Dr Tazeen Fatma, welcomed this decision of the divisional commissioner. She said that



in the Indian Constitution, the minorities have been given the right to establish their own educational institutions and the right to operate them, hence the government cannot seize this university.

Inquilab (July 17) reports that while commenting on the notice issued by Rampur Development Authority for the demolition of the buildings of Jauhar University, the University administration said the construction of the buildings to which objections are being raised was done when this entire area was outside the jurisdiction of Rampur Development Authority. Later, the area came under the jurisdiction of Rampur Development Authority, therefore, there was no legal requirement to get the building plans approved by the authority for buildings constructed prior to this. However, the Rampur Development Authority rejected this claim of the University administration.

It is to be noted that this University has been entangled in legal cases for a long time and Uttar Pradesh has already taken possession of majority of the land. In January this month, Azam Khan and his relatives had resigned from the management committee of the University. It is said that the foundation for this University was laid on September 18, 2006. That time Azam Khan was a cabinet minister in the government of then chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav. Later, due to the exit of the Samajwadi Party government, the inauguration of the University was left in the cold storage. In 2012, when the Samajwadi Party government returned to power, this

University was duly inaugurated on September 18, 2012.

Criticising this decision of the state government, former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh Akhilesh Yadav said this notice is proof of the anti-Muslim mentality of the government. He asked whether the ruling BJP wants to deliberately push the Muslims out of the education sector. National spokesperson of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul

Muslimeen Syed Asim Waqar said the action has been taken against Mohammad Azam Khan due to personal enmity. He asked whether action would also be taken against all those in Uttar Pradesh whose building plans have not been approved, given that 90 percent of them lack such approval.

Urdu Times (July 17) states that the All India Muslim Personal Law Board has condemned the action of the state government against Jauhar University. The board alleged that at one level the government has failed to remove the educational backwardness of Muslims, on the other hand when Muslims established educational institutions on their own effort, they are reducing them to dust. The board has described this government action as motivated by political vendetta.

Urdu Times (July 22) in its editorial said that those who used to advise Muslims to focus on education are completely silent today. The newspaper alleged that the current Muslim leadership is adopting double standards and they have completely failed to protect the interest of Muslims.

Hindustan (July 29) in its editorial has welcomed the relief given by the administration to the Jauhar University. The newspaper said that the ruling party is hell bent on giving a saffron colour to education. The Jauhar University is a hurdle for them in this campaign, hence a decision has been taken to demolish it.

Hamara Samaj (July 29) in its editorial said that ever since the BJP came to power, it has been targeting Muslim



education and its religious institutions. It is clear from this development of Jauhar University that communal powers like the BJP want to keep Muslims backward in every sector. In order to protect the Constitution and the multicultural system, it is very much necessary to protect this University.

Urdu Times (July 26) in its editorial said there is a clear provision in the Indian Constitution that no citizen shall be discriminated against on the grounds of religion, caste, race, or language. However, ever since the BJP came to power, it has been making a mockery of this constitutional vision. The Uttar Pradesh administration's order to demolish Jauhar University using bulldozer is direct evidence of the growing hatred against Muslims. The newspaper urged that it is essential for people to be vigilant and take to the streets against the government's arbitrary actions to safeguard the constitutional rights of minorities.

Hindustan Express (July 24) in its editorial alleged that ever since the BJP came to power, it has made life miserable for Muslims in the country. The rights granted to them under the Constitution are being completely undermined because the BJP has majority in the state Assemblies. With its help, they are forcibly imposing Uniform Civil Code (UCC) on Muslims in order to finish off Islam and Shariah. It is clear from the order to demolish

Mohammad Ali Jauhar University that the ruling party wants Muslims to turn their backs on their religious identity, the Quran, and the Prophet. Today, the Millat (Muslim community) is passing through its most difficult times in the country. In every state, the Muslim is a victim of insecurity and they are being deprived of the rights given to them in the Constitution. The newspaper urged Muslims to forget mutual differences and get united and come out on the streets to protect the Quran and the Prophet.

Urdu Times (July 21) in its editorial criticised that the ruling party is bent on destroying—due to its anti-Muslim policies—the university that Muslims had established to educate their children by spending their own hard-earned savings, without any government assistance.

The newspaper said that if there are any loopholes in the construction of these buildings from the legal point of view, why no step has been taken to resolve it at the administrative level? It is clear from this that the policy of the government is anti-Muslim.

Etemaad (July 20) in its editorial criticised that the saffron party, which is targeting the masjids and dargahs of Muslims, has now started a campaign to demolish their educational institutions as well. The newspaper said the Muslim population in Uttar Pradesh is 20 percent and they are very backward from the

educational point of view. The BJP does not want the development of Muslims in any sector. They want to keep the Muslims backward. This is the reason why they have targeted this university. The newspaper claimed that a plan to establish the first government Urdu university in Rampur was taken in 2004. The then Governor T V Rajeshwar had put a stop to it and the then Congress government at the Centre had also opposed it. In 2012, when the Samajwadi Party came to power in the state, this university was inaugurated. Now the BJP is determined to demolish this university due to its political enmity. It is not at all worried about the future of the students studying there. The BJP deliberately wants to make the future of Muslim students bleak.

Avadhnama (July 19) in its editorial criticised the decision of the state government to demolish Jauhar University. The newspaper said this university has got recognition from the University Grants Commission. Does the BJP government want to destroy it simply because Azam



Khan is associated with it? Why the communal government of the BJP wants to make the future of hundreds of teachers and employees working in this university and thousands of students bleak? Is this not political revenge?

Aurangabad Times (July 19) in its editorial said the decision of the government was not based on the law or the Constitution, but based on the anti-Muslim policy of the BJP. The ruling party wants to keep Muslims backward in every sector and it wants to wipe out Islam from the country so that it could be turned into a Hindu Rashtra.

UCC Bill passed in Madhya Pradesh Assembly



Inquilab (July 22) reports that the Madhya Pradesh Assembly has passed the 'Madhya Pradesh Uniform Civil Code Bill, 2026' through a voice vote amid protests from the Opposition. After the passing of the bill,

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav described it as an important decision in the history of the state and said that after the implementation of this law, there will be uniformity in personal laws. Addressing the



Assembly, he said that under the new law, triple-talaq and *halala* have been declared as offence. A ban has been imposed on contracting more than one marriage. This apart, registration of marriage as well as divorce have been made mandatory. He said that biological and adopted children of married or unmarried parents will have equal rights in the inheritance law.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav alleged that the Congress has been opposing this bill only due to its politics of Muslim vote bank. He made it clear that this law will not be applicable for Adivasis. Earlier, the chief minister had announced that the Madhya Pradesh cabinet had approved the draft of this bill. He said that in future no individual in Madhya Pradesh would be able to marry more than once. Minister of State for Skill Development and Employment Dr Gautam Tetwal tabled the bill in the House as soon as the Assembly session began, which the Congress strongly opposed. Congress legislator Arif Masood demanded from the Speaker of the Assembly Narendra Singh Tomar that this bill is very sensitive and controversial, and therefore it should be sent to the Select Committee of the House for serious consideration of all its legal aspects.

Urdu Times (July 20) states that Chief Minister Mohan Yadav claimed that nearly 80 percent Muslim women and 40 percent Muslim men who appeared before the committee that had been constituted to prepare the draft of the UCC, supported the draft bill. It is clear from it that there is a general consensus in favour of the law among major section of the minorities.

According to the government, the committee received 10 lakh written recommendations. In this law, the minimum age for marriage for men is 21 and for women it is 18 years.

Mumbai Urdu News (July 22) in its editorial criticised the passing of the UCC Bill by the Madhya Pradesh Assembly. The newspaper said that the ruling party passed this controversial bill

in order to divert the attention of the people from the burning issues of the society. It has been said in the editorial that at one level the government and its supporters are describing it as an important step towards bringing Constitutional equality, to protect the rights of women and to implement a uniform law among all the citizens of the country, but Muslims fear that this law will take away their fundamental right to live their lives according to their religious matters and Shariah laws.

The newspaper said that through the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, the Muslims in the country have been given the assurance that the government will not interfere in their Shariah laws in any way. Later in the Indian Constitution several important clauses were included to provide security and assurance to the minorities. Despite this, the current ruling party has been adopting such unconstitutional measures to amass the votes of the majority community.

The newspaper said that implementation of the UCC is not just a legal issue, instead it is also linked to the Constitution, the religious freedom of minorities and the multiculturalism of the nation. India is a country where different religions, civilizations, languages and customs have existed for centuries.

Keeping this reality in mind, the framers of the Constitution respected the fundamental rights of the minorities. Article 25 of the Constitution allows every citizen to follow his religion and propagate the same. The UCC law is against this basic spirit of the Constitution.

The supporters of the UCC argue that the law regarding marriage, divorce, inheritance and adoption are different for the followers of different religions. Due to this, many times legal complications arise, hence there should be equal laws for all the countrymen. On the other hand, Muslims say that the personal law is a part of their religious identity. In Muslim personal law, issues like marriage, divorce, Khula and inheritance are prepared as per the directions of the Quran and Shariah. This Shariah law was made by the God and the Prophet. No government or court has the right to interfere in the Shariah law of the country.

Hindustan (July 21) in its editorial said that as soon as the BJP assumed power at the Centre in 2014, the BJP had declared three main agenda---construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir and implement the UCC in the entire country. After Ram Mandir and Article 370, the BJP is now moving fast to achieve this third goal. Under this policy, it has been implemented first in Uttarakhand and later in Gujarat and Assam. This apart, as soon as coming to power in West Bengal, the BJP constituted a committee to discuss the UCC while the Maharashtra government has also decided to implement it in the state. It is clear from this that the BJP is fully committed to implementing the UCC in the entire country.

The newspaper said that due to this step of the government, there is widespread



anxiety and insecurity among the minorities especially Muslims. They feel that through this law, BJP is interfering unduly in their personal religious matters.

The newspaper said that when the UCC was included in the Directive Principles of the Constitution, then also there was strong opposition in the Constitutional Assembly against it. Since there is no two-thirds majority for the BJP in the Parliament, it is unable to implement it simultaneously across the country at the central level. In fact, this is a deliberate political tactic by the BJP, under the guise of which it wants to garner the votes of the majority Hindus.

Etemaad (July 13) in its editorial said that the Maharashtra government has decided to form a committee to implement the UCC. This decision of the government has created discomfort among the Muslims. They are realising that the government has decided to interfere in their religious affairs. The truth is that after the BJP assumed power, it has committed to end the separate identity of Quran and Shariah. It is trying to forcibly include Muslims in the majority community.

Opposition to Anti-Radicalisation Cell in Gujarat

Inquilab (July 20) reports that the intelligence bureau in Gujarat has issued a circular to all the superintendents of police and commissioners of police in the state. In the circular, they have been directed to set up an Anti-Radicalisation Cell (ARC) in all the districts. Some sections of the Muslim community have expressed concern

regarding this decision. In this connection, the coordinator of Gujarat Minorities Coordination Committee, Mujahid Nafiz, has sent a memorandum to the Chief Minister and the Director General of Police in the state. It has been said in the memorandum that as per the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), a



fundamentalist is defined as an individual who engages in anti-national activities based on an extremist ideology, poses a threat to the country's unity and integrity, fosters hatred towards people of other religions, or spreads hatred via social media, radio, television, or other communication channels. It has been alleged in the memorandum that these directives raise concerns that the religious identity and institutions of the Muslim community are being targeted. It also mentions points such as keeping a beard, wearing a veil, using Arabic words, and maintaining records related to madrasas, their teachers, and Ulema. It has also been alleged in the memorandum that after the implementation of the order, the officials of police and intelligence department have been visiting madrasas and gathering information about imams, ulema, and teachers, in addition to details regarding the bank accounts associated with these institutions. Muslim organizations in Gujarat are also considering challenging this circular in the court. The 'Gujarat Muslim Interest Protection Committee' has called an emergency meeting to discuss this issue.

Hindustan Express (July 28) in its editorial has criticised the setting up of the Anti-Radicalisation Cell by the Gujarat government. The newspaper alleged that the democratic-secular structure of the country has come under threat. Leaders of the ruling party are delivering provocative speeches against Muslims and are making appeals to boycott them or wipe them out. This apart, their religious places are targeted using bulldozers. To understand

the government's current political and social policies, it is essential to focus on the SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) prepared by the Gujarat government. This is not a mere SOP, instead it is an important step forward to end the religious and social liberty of Muslims.

The newspaper has written that the BJP government in Gujarat had promised the establishment of an Anti-Radicalisation Cell in its election manifesto in 2022, which is being implemented now. A special force or 'ARC' is being raised for this purpose, and approval has been granted for 139 appointments. In fact, this circular has been prepared to target ordinary Muslims. On the other hand, the government has chosen to remain silent on the gangs promoting violence in the name of Gauraksha and on appeals made by Hindutvawadi fundamentalists to boycott Muslims and to wipe them out. Meanwhile, a provision has been made in the circular issued by the Gujarat government to declare Muslims as extremists for using Arabic words.

It has been stated in the circular that a close watch should be maintained on the activities of those who have returned after visiting Muslim nations. Those who frequently visit madrasas and also those who suddenly leave their studies or jobs citing religious duty should also be kept under watch. It is clear from this circular that it has been prepared with the aim of harassing Muslims and to make their life miserable.

Mumbai Urdu News (July 18) reports that the Gujarat ATS has claimed to have arrested five suspected persons linked to banned terrorist organisation Jaish-e-Mohammad. Those who have been arrested have been produced in the court and taken in eight-day police custody. According to security agencies, IED and material meant for making bombs were seized from them. This apart, information has also been received that these people practiced explosions several times in desolate areas at the behest of Pakistani handlers.

Supreme Court stays bulldozer action in Rajasthan

Hamara Samaj (July 18) states that while hearing a petition filed by Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, the Supreme Court has imposed a two-week stay on the action to demolish masjids, madrasas and dargahs located in the border areas of Rajasthan. This apart, the petitioner has been directed to approach the Rajasthan High Court in Jodhpur for the next hearing in this case. On behalf of the petitioners, Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal, Huzefa Ahmadi, Nizam Pasha and Tahir Hakim argued in the Supreme Court. The hearing in this case was conducted by a bench comprising Justice P S Narasimha and Justice Alok Aradhe.

It is to be noted that a high-level delegation of Jamiat Ulema has visited the respective border areas of Rajasthan. The delegation visited these areas and studied the notices issued for the demolition of different buildings associated with Muslim community. On the basis of this, nearly 40 petitions on behalf of the affected persons were filed in Rajasthan High Court, while other affected persons also filed different petitions. In this manner, a total of 60 cases reached the high court, but the court rejected their petitions. Following this, the Jamiat Ulema has approached the Supreme Court in the matter.

On behalf of the petitioners, Kabil Sibal argued in the Supreme Court that masjids, madrasas and mazars are being demolished using bulldozers in the border areas of Rajasthan and notices have been issued to hundreds of people in this connection. Later, while imposing an interim two-week stay on the demolitions, the Supreme Court stated that in such cases, only the respective high courts could decide. The court also made it clear that in its historic verdict on November 13, 2024 it had stated that before the demolition of any building, it is mandatory to follow the legal process and the provisions of the Constitution.

Inquilab (July 15) reports that the Rajasthan High Court has rejected the petitions questioning the show-cause notice issued by the government to masjids, madrasas and dargahs located within a radius

of 50 kilometres on India-Pakistan border in Rajasthan. The court, while considering it is a very sensitive matter linked to national security, said that it is necessary to strictly adhere to the directions issued by the government in matters related to security in border areas. While hearing the case, Justice Samir Jain specially mentioned about Section 139 of Border Security Force (BSF) Act and the notification issued by the Home Ministry in 2021. Through this notification, the Central Government expanded the jurisdiction and operational powers of the Border Security Force in border areas, extending them up to 50 km from the international border.

The lawyer of the petitioners argued in the court that in the notices issued to the affected people, it has not been clarified anywhere what kind of threat to national security is being posed by these madrasas, mosques and dargahs. He also asked why the religious places of only one community is being targeted? On this, the high court made it clear that the Home Ministry issued this notification after a detailed discussion. Its purpose is to stop cross-border smuggling, infiltration and similar such activities, which could become a threat to national security.

Inquilab (July 5) states that addressing a press conference organised at the central office of Jamaat-e-Islami, the organisation's national secretary Shafi Madani said that a high-level delegation of Jamaat-e-Islami visited Barmer, Jaisalmer and Jodhpur from June 29 to July 2. During this time, the delegation met the local people, to whom the administration issued notice to demolish their properties.

Jamaat-e-Islami alleged that masjids, madrasas and dargahs are deliberately targeted on the pretext of campaign against illegal properties in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi and in a few other states. He stated that Jamaat-e-Islami would effectively raise this serious issue before the judiciary so that the demolition of religious sites belonging to the Muslim community could be halted.

Communal riots after attack on Kanwar Yatra in Nepal



Etemaad (July 31) reports that communal riots have broken out in several places in Nepal following an attack on Kanwar Yatra in Kaptanganj town in Sunsari district. The fire of communal riots is spreading rapidly. In order to curb the riots, curfew was imposed in three districts and nearly a dozen towns for an indefinite period. So far, three persons have been confirmed dead and 16 people were injured, out of which the condition of a few was stated to be serious. Two among those dead have been identified as 22-year-old youth Jay Prakash Mehta and another 25-year-old youth Om Prakash Mehta. The third person has not been identified yet.

Urdu Times (July 31) states that the riots started when a procession of Kanwar Yatris playing DJ music was passing near a mosque. A few people in the masjid objected to it and a dispute arose between the two over loud music and carrying religious flags. It is alleged that stone-pelting took place soon after, which soon took a violent turn. In order to control the situation, the police opened fire. It is said three persons were killed in the police firing and 16 others were injured. As soon as reports about this incident spread, communal riots broke out in three districts

in Madhesi region. The administration imposed an indefinite curfew in more than a dozen towns including Dewanganj, Harinagar, Kaptanganj, Inaruwa and Lahan.

In order to strengthen the security arrangements in Terai region and to control the situation, contingents of Nepal Army and Nepal armed police force were also deployed apart from Nepal police. Concerns over the communal riots were expressed in Kathmandu located House of Representatives and in the National Assembly as well. MPs in Parliament belonging to different political parties demanded an independent inquiry into the incidents and stringent legal action against the accused. MP of ruling Rashtriya Swatantra Party Samina Miya alleged in the Parliament that a few political elements are deliberately trying to spread hatred between Hindus and Muslims. National Human Rights Commission and local administration have started an investigation into the incident. The administration has imposed a complete ban on protests and religious processions in the Terai region.

Inquilab (July 31) states that reports of largescale vandalism and looting have been received from several places during



the communal riots that took place in Nepal. Several properties and shops were set on fire during the violence which were looted as well. Nepal President Ramchandra Paudel expressed concern over the riots. He appealed to the public to maintain peace and uphold the centuries-old social harmony. Nepal Prime Minister Balen Shah called an emergency meeting of National Security Council in view of the seriousness of the situation.

Inquilab (August 1) reports that the flames of communal violence that spread in Janakpur, Sunsari and Morang districts of Nepal have spread to India's border regions as well. In view of the sensitive situation in the border areas, the Sashastra Seema Bal and Bihar Police stepped up vigilance on the border so that any kind of infiltration and disturbances could be stopped.

Inquilab (August 1) in its editorial expressed concern over the spread of flames of communal riots in Nepal. It has been said in the editorial that communal harmony has been prevailing in Nepal for centuries but these riots have dealt a severe blow to this historic and glorious tradition of Nepal. The newspaper wrote that for the past few years, a few anti-social and political elements have been trying to spread the flames of communal hatred and it looks like they have succeeded this time. Nepal and Bharat are not just neighbouring countries, in fact, the two countries share

deep, centuries-old ties rooted in history, culture, and people-to-people connections. The open borders between the two countries had further strengthened these ties. Lakhs of Nepali citizens are doing jobs and receiving education in Bharat. This is the reason why whenever public order is disrupted, the

repercussions are not limited to Nepal alone, the impact is felt by the people of India as well. The newspaper said even during the regime of the former King of Nepal Birendra Bikram Shah, some elements had tried to create tension between the Hindus and Muslims in Nepal, but they could not succeed that time. The Muslim community has been staying peacefully in Nepal for centuries. There is a constant increase in the number of masjids and madrasas there. However, now during the rule of Prime Minister Balendra Shah, a storm of religious hatred has swept through there as well. Efforts are being made to disturb peace through provocative incidents outside the masjids and madrasas.

Hindustan Express (August 3) has expressed serious concern that the flames of the atmosphere of hatred being stoked against Muslims have reached as far as Nepal.

Though the population of Muslims in entire Nepal is less than five percent of the total population in the country, their population in the Terai region that borders India is comparatively higher. The newspaper demanded the Nepal government to take strict legal action against elements that take the law into their own hands without any discrimination so that communal harmony and mutual brotherhood are maintained in Nepal.

Incidents of persecution of minorities on the rise in Bangladesh



Qaumi Bharat (July 29) states that the Bangladesh Hindu Buddha Christian Unity Council, while addressing a press conference in Dhaka, claimed that there is an increase in incidents of persecution of minorities in the past six months in the country. Between January 1, 2026 and June 30, 2026, there were 257 incidents of communal violence registered in Bangladesh. At least 44 people were killed in these incidents. During this period, incidents of gang rape of minority women occurred at five places, while there were 10 incidents involving abduction, extortion and harassment.

This apart, murderous attacks were carried out against people in 42 cases. A total of 62 incidents came to the fore regarding places of worship, which included the defacement of statues, vandalism, looting, and arson. Meanwhile, 15 cases of forcible occupation of properties of religious sites have been registered.

The rioters targeted the residential and commercial centres of minorities and resorted to looting at 47 places. Apart from this, under the guise of false allegations of insulting Islam and the Prophet, mobs

carried out violent attacks on people and subjected them to abuse in nine separate incidents.

Hindustan Express (July 26) states that Bangladesh President Mohammad Shahabuddin has resigned from his post. Following his resignation, Bangladesh's National Citizen Party (NCP) demanded that he should be arrested immediately and a case shall be filed against him in the court for treason. The allegation of the party is that Shahabuddin had fully cooperated with the Hasina government during the period of deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to curb the democratic rights of the people. His stand was against the people of Bangladesh and he had supported the oppressive government of Sheikh Hasina.

According to Bangladesh's prominent newspaper 'Prothom Alo,' NCP secretary Akhtar Hussain, while addressing a press conference in Dhaka, demanded that Shahabuddin shall be arrested immediately. He said the Constitutional protection that he enjoyed for being the President has now ended after his resignation. Following the resignation of Shahabuddin, the Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament Hafiz Uddin Ahmad has taken

over as the caretaker President. It is to be noted that the outgoing President Mohammad Shahabuddin was elected unopposed as President as Awami League candidate on April 24, 2023.

Urdu Times (July 23) states that at the instigation of Pakistan, Bangladesh has demanded the activation of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in the region. Bangladesh made this demand during a meeting of 'BIMSTEC' national security chiefs hosted by India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval. It is to be noted that SAARC is inactive for the past 10 years. Pakistan has long been demanding its revival, and now Bangladesh too has started echoing its stance on the matter.

Bangladesh Prime Minister's defence advisor Brigadier General A K M Shamsul Islam (Retired) said that though SAARC was established in 1985, an official declaration for its setting up was announced by the then President of



Bangladesh Ziaur Rahman in 1980. Following the terrorist attack that took place in Uri sector, India had boycotted the SAARC meeting set to be taken place in Pakistan in 2016. Later, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Maldives slowly stopped taking interest in this organisation. India has shifted its focus from SAARC to activating another regional organisation 'BIMSTEC' set up in 1997. In this organisation, apart from India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand are included.

Growing dissatisfaction among citizens in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir



Chattan (August 2) states that the flames of rebellion unleashed by the local residents in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir against rising inflation and an

oppressive military administration has been spreading rapidly. The Pakistan government has so far completely failed to curb this public agitation which has been raging for the past two months following a call by the Jammu-Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee. When the local police in PoJK flatly refused to use force against their own protesting citizens, the administration was compelled to summon additional troops from the Punjab province, including paramilitary forces such as the police, Frontier Corps, and Pakistani Rangers, as well as army units.



As per media reports, due to the heavy deadlock, the life has come to a standstill in PoJK in the past two months. All the markets, industrial units and shops are closed. Ever since an announcement by the Awami Action Committee to indefinitely gherao the Assembly located at Muzaffarabad, the situation became explosive and delicate. Several massive rallies of the protesters have been regularly marching from different places in PoJK towards Rawalacot and Muzaffarabad. According to government sources, till now more than 40 protesters were killed in the indiscriminate firing by paramilitary forces, whereas non-government sources claim that the real number of those who were killed is much more.

Chattan (August 3) in its editorial claimed that the Pakistani security forces have shot dead hundreds of citizens till now. The newspaper has written that Pakistan has occupied this region in an illegal manner and a complete Pakistani administration is being operated there in the name of so called 'Azad PoJK' and 'Giljit-Baltistan Council.' The people of this region have been totally deprived of their basic democratic rights till now. Under the pretext of the so-called 'AJK Constitutional Act' of 1974, Pakistan has been making this false claim that this region is under the control of the local

government there, but the truth is that its entire administration is run by the 'Federal Ministry of Kashmir Affairs' located in Islamabad.

In PoJK, civil discontent intensified recently when the local administration imposed a ban on a prominent citizens' organisation 'Jammu-Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee' just before the elections under the anti-terrorist law and stopped it from taking part in democratic activities. Currently, the situation remains explosive in the entire region and life has come to a complete standstill. Curfew has been imposed in majority of the regions and there has been a complete ban on the use of mobile and internet services.

Chattan (July 2) states that when the process of Assembly elections started in PoJK, the public anger erupted. The Awami Action Committee had been consistently demanding a reduction in inflation and adequate participation for local citizens in the administration. A major reason for the controversy was the 12 reserved seats in the Assembly which had been reserved for the Kashmiri refugees residing in different provinces of Pakistan. The local protesters allege that the Islamabad government has been using these seats to commit fraud in the elections and to elect the government of their liking. When the government flatly refused to

consider these demands, the situation turned worse.

Meanwhile, former Pakistani Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has made a significant statement, asserting that the assembly elections taking place in this region have been fair in every respect. He alleged that Muslim League (Nawaz) have been attempting to forcibly win this election through largescale rigging.

Etemaad (July 29) reports that largescale violence took place during the voting for the Assembly elections in PoJK. Several workers of Pakistan People's Party

(PPP) were killed in the violent clashes that took place between the workers of different political parties in Kotli district. The PPP alleged that the supporters of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) candidate Sardar Umer Naim opened fire in order to forcibly seize the polling centres. The chairman of PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari alleged that no attention was paid to conduct the elections in a fair manner. Incidents of Muslim League (Nawaz) workers seizing a polling station and setting ballot papers on fire have also been reported from Bhimber district.

500 Afghan citizens killed in Pakistani air strike



Qaumi Bharat (July 25) reports that human rights organization 'Amnesty International' in its recent report has strongly criticized a Pakistani air strike on a de-addiction centre located in Kabul in March 2026. The organization said this attack was carried out in complete violation of international laws and it should be seen from the context of a possible 'war crime.' The Amnesty International has also released more than 60 satellite pictures related to this attack. The organization said that its detailed investigation has failed to confirm the Pakistani claim that an Afghanistan weapons godown or any training centre for terrorists was located there. The organization claimed that 269 Afghan citizens were killed in these air strikes by Pakistan. This apart, more than 500 Afghan citizens were killed and over 1,000 injured in Pakistani air strikes following the massive tension between the

two countries along the border ever since October 2025.

Qaumi Bharat (August 3) reports that the Pakistan police have arrested more than 150 Afghan citizens from the Multan city in Punjab province. This includes 13 Afghan doctors as well who belong to local medical college and hospital. Pakistan's interior minister Mohsen Naqvi said that a drive is on to arrest the Afghan citizens staying in the country without any valid visa. Till now, lakhs of illegal citizens have been sent to deportation centres as part of this campaign and they will be sent back to Afghanistan.

As per another news, taking stringent action against Afghan origin citizens staying without any legal documents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the administration demolished their colonies located in Mittani region. According to the administration, citizens of Afghan origin are staying illegally in thousands of numbers in these colonies. The administration is sending these people who are staying illegally to detention centres, from where they will be forcibly pushed through the Afghanistan border.

Qaumi Bharat (July 20) states that the Afghan government has registered a complaint with the United Nations that

Pakistan is forcibly expelling the Afghan citizens staying there on a massive scale. However, they possess valid refugee certificate issued by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the official registration card issued by Pakistan. It has been said in the complaint that majority of those who are being expelled were born in Pakistan itself.

BBC (March 3) reports that at least 14 people were killed and more than a dozen people were injured in a suicide attack on a police station during a peace rally organized at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan. According to local

police officers, an explosion took place when a 'Swat Peace Rally' was taking place right in front of a police station located at Kabal town in Swat district. This rally was organized by a local civil organization 'Swat Aman Jirga.' Those taking part in the rally raised slogans demanding peace in the locality and were carrying placards in their hands. Those who were killed included ordinary citizens and children, apart from police personnel. Following the incident, the chief minister of the province made announcement to immediately provide appropriate financial assistance to the families of the deceased.

New restrictions on wedding and engagement rituals in Afghanistan



BBC (July 29) states that the Ministry for Haj and Religious Affairs in Afghanistan has issued a 10-page official guidelines document. Under this directive, strict instructions have been issued to all Qazis and those conducting the nikah across the country to ensure a complete ban on musical performances, dancing, fireworks, bridal makeup, the use of hair extensions, and the application of perfume during the Nikah ceremony. This new order has been issued at the behest of the supreme leader of Afghan Taliban Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzadah, as per which marriage, engagement and in all other family functions, only Shariah rules will be applicable.

It is to be noted that the previous directions which were issued in the year 2024 have further been strengthened now.

As per this new rule, during the engagement ceremony, the bride and bridegroom cannot put rings on each other and neither any function can be organized where men and women participate together. The Taliban, while imposing a ban on all beauty parlours in the country, stopped women from going there and provisions have been made for severe punishment and trials in Shariah courts for those who violate the rules. It has been said in the directive that the marriage shall be conducted as per the directions of the Prophet within the masjid with utmost simplicity which does not involve a huge dowry, display of jewellery, or lavish feasts. Additionally, restrictions have been imposed on women leaving the house without a hijab or burqa and traveling on public transport without a male relative.

Hamas agrees to Gaza Board of Peace Accord



Inqilab (August 1) reports that Hamas and the Gaza Board of Peace have agreed on a roadmap regarding the next phase of the ceasefire. As part of it, Hamas has agreed to hand over all its weapons to an international organisation.

According to the Gaza Board of Peace, the goal of this agreement is to pave the way for the establishment of a new administration, restoration of security, reconstruction and economic development in Gaza. Following the disarmament of Hamas, the Israeli army has also expressed agreement to completely withdraw from Gaza. Hamas has also confirmed this agreement and expressed hope that the mediators will play their role in implementing this agreement. The Gaza Board of Peace expressed happiness that Hamas has accepted the disarmament plan for the first time.

US President Donald Trump announced that Hamas and all other armed organizations in Gaza have agreed to disarm. Following this disarmament, the withdrawal of the Israeli army from Gaza would begin, and later the management of Gaza will be handed over to a new Palestinian administrative organisation. This agreement is an important step toward

implementing Trump's 20-point peace deal.

Trump stated that following this, the work of rebuilding Gaza will begin through an international authority with the financial assistance of various countries. In this plan, Israel would be guaranteed that no aggressive action will be initiated against it from Gaza in the future, nor will Gaza be used as a base for any other attack.

The responsibility for maintaining peace and order in Gaza will lie with an international stabilisation force and the Palestinian police. Trump stated that to implement this agreement, Egypt, Qatar and Turkey have made an important contribution. However, an Israeli spokesperson has said that the conditions laid down by the Trump administration are not satisfactory for Israel.

According to another news report, Ghazi Hamad, a member of the Hamas negotiation team, has said that if the Israeli government does not act according to this agreement, Hamas will reject it. He said that this agreement has been made under very difficult circumstances and it is very complex, so implementing it is not easy. In this regard, Israel must start and it will have to withdraw its army from Gaza.

Ghazi Hamad said that if Israel does not implement this agreement, Hamas will also not be ready to hand over its weapons to an international organization. On the other hand, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has refused to comment directly on this agreement. However, he has definitely said that unless Hamas adheres fully to demilitarisation, Israel will not withdraw its soldiers from Gaza.

According to another news report, the US administration has made it clear that if Israel does not withdraw its army from Gaza even after demilitarisation by Hamas, it will cause deep disappointment to US President Trump.

The US spokesperson said that Washington is not making any new agreement with Israel, but rather it is demanding the implementation of the same 20-point peace agreement to which Israel has already expressed its consent.

Inqilab (July 21) states that Hamas has elected Khalil al-Hayya as its new chief. He will replace Yahya Sinwar, who



was killed during the war in October 2024. Khalil al-Hayya was born in Gaza in 1960 and has been associated with this organisation since the time of Hamas's formation. Prior to this, he was associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. Khalil al-Hayya has been a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council since 2006. Before being elected as the Hamas chief, he was the deputy head of the organization. In this internal election, he defeated Khaled Mashal. Khalil al-Hayya is currently living in Qatar.

Saudi Arabia's international coalition against Houthis

Qaumi Tanzeem (31 July) reports that Saudi Arabia has decided to form an international coalition in view of the increasing attacks by Houthi rebels on ships in the Red Sea so that maritime travel can be made safe. It is significant to note that on July 20, Houthi rebels in Yemen announced a maritime blockade against Saudi Arabia. The Houthis allege that the Saudi leadership has been interfering in Yemen's affairs for several years and looting resources there. Following this blockade when the Houthis targeted Saudi oil tankers and ships in the Red Sea, Saudi Arabia, in response, carried out airstrikes on Houthi positions at Yemen's Al-Hudaydah port.

Reportedly, the Saudi government also tried to raise this serious issue in the United Nations. This new situation arising

in the Red Sea has created a new trouble for the US and its allies, because due to this, the tension between Iran and Israel has intensified. Gulf countries do not want to get entangled in this dispute. Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain's foreign ministers requested Saudi Arabia's foreign minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan to make efforts to stop the increasing tension in this region. These three countries also expressed concern over Iran and its related militia organizations' growing activities in Iraq and Yemen.

The United Nations-recognised government of Yemen has expressed concern over the fact that Houthi rebels want to establish a mechanism to collect taxes from ships passing through the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab. Yemen's information minister Muammar al-Eryani

criticised this move and has said that this will provide a new source of income to Iran-backed militia organizations, which will not be in the interest of this region.

Hindustan (July 21) reports that the military spokesperson of the Houthis has said that if a Saudi maritime blockade is imposed against Yemen, there will be full retaliation against any attack on Yemen's ports and Sana'a airport. Spokesperson Yahya Saree said they will not accept the blockade of Sana'a airport at any cost.

It is significant to note that the Houthis had alleged that Saudi Arabia had carried out attacks on Sanaa airport, in response to which the Houthis targeted Saudi Arabia's Abha airport. Pakistan has expressed concern over the attacks being carried out on Saudi Arabia by the Houthis. A senior Pakistani official told Reuters that "the top leadership of our country has made it clear to Iran that any attack on Saudi Arabia would be considered an attack on Pakistan, and if Yemen's Houthi rebels attack any region of Saudi Arabia, then Pakistan will respond to that attack along with Saudi Arabia." The Gulf Cooperation Council has condemned the attacks on Saudi Arabia and demanded the United Nations to take stringent action against the Houthis.

Aurangabad Times (July 18) states that Iran has directed the Houthis to start the blockade of the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab so that the global energy crisis takes a serious turn. Iran has also directed the Houthis that if the US or Israeli military targets Iranian power plants or nuclear centres, then they should intensify their attacks on Arab soil.

Following this instruction, Houthi rebels have deployed ultra-modern anti-ship missiles and drones near Yemen's Al-Hudaydah port and the Gulf of Aden.

Qaumi Tanzeem (July 20) quoted sources as saying that Yemen's UN-recognised government has refused permission for an Iranian aircraft to land at



Sana'a airport. Yemen's transport minister Mohsen Ali Al-Amri announced on Yemen TV channel that no country would be allowed to land its aircraft in Yemen without permission. He issued a warning stating that if any country lands its aircraft without permission, it will be targeted.

Urdu Times (July 26) quoted Houthi organisation Ansar Allah that they carried out ballistic missile attacks on Saudi Arabia's oil production plants. This action was taken in response to air strikes carried out by Saudi Arabia on Houthi positions in Yemen.

Qaumi Tanzeem (July 20) states that Yemen's Houthi rebels have decided to impose taxes on ships passing through the Red Sea. Significantly, prior to this, Iran had also announced plans to collect fees from ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz. It is reported that Houthis, under this plan, have decided to completely exempt Chinese ships from paying any form of tax. They have taken this decision on instructions from Iran.

The US has termed it against international rules and made it clear that neither the Houthis nor Iran have any right to make any kind of illegal collection from commercial ships passing through international waterways.

Inquilab (July 19) reports that Houthi defence minister Major General Mohammad Al-Atifi had told Yemen's official news agency Saba in an interview that "they will obey every command of Iran's supreme leader. If the US and Saudi Arabia maintain the blockade of Yemen,

they will attack the military bases of both these countries. Our enemies should know that we have full capacity to give a

crushing blow to every attack. We will continue to target US military bases located in Saudi Arabia.”

Nuclear agreement between Saudi Arabia and the US



Etemaad (July 23) reports that US President Donald Trump has approved a historic nuclear cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia. This agreement would be effective for the next 30 years. Under this agreement, US companies will play a major role in the development of Saudi Arabia’s civilian nuclear energy programme.

According to the provisions of the agreement, the US could help Saudi Arabia set up a uranium enrichment plant. Now, this agreement has been presented before the US Congress for final approval. Due to this historic agreement, US’s nuclear industry is expected to receive multi-billion dollar commercial deals from Saudi Arabia. It is noteworthy that Saudi Arabia is also a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The initiation of the nuclear agreement between both countries was previously started by former US President Joe Biden’s regime.

The US energy secretary had visited Saudi Arabia to inspect the preparations related to setting up the plant. Israel has

criticised this agreement, stating that this decision goes against the mutual interests of the US and Israel. Israel believes that Saudi Arabia might share fuel with Iran in the future.

Inquilab (July 24) reports that US President Donald Trump has made it clear that the civilian nuclear agreement with Saudi Arabia will be fully implemented only when Saudi Arabia officially recognises Israel by joining the Abraham Accords. Along with this, the US is placing a mandatory condition on Saudi Arabia that it will use nuclear technology and fuel only for peaceful purposes, and the misuse of this agreement will not be done for any military purpose. Significantly, the US has already entered into similar agreements with several other countries in the world, including the United Arab Emirates.

According to another news item, the US House of Representatives has passed a record defence budget of \$1.15 trillion for the next year. In this new defence budget, additional financial arrangements have been ensured for military operations related to West Asia and Iran. Along with this, special emphasis has been placed in the budget on continuing the supply of defence material and military cooperation to US’s ally country, Israel. In this new annual budget, an additional amount of \$73 billion has been allocated for the Pentagon and other intelligence agencies. Now, it will have to be approved by the Senate, after which it will be sent to the President for signature.

Security agreement between Syria and Israel under consideration



Inquilab (July 27) reports that Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa stated in a special interview that Syria is actively making efforts to reach a security agreement with Israel. Its objective is to establish permanent peace between the two countries. Given to *Al Jazeera*, this special interview was also broadcast by Syria's official radio and television channel.

President Ahmad al-Sharaa clarified that this agreement will not have any negative impact on the Golan Heights region, which is illegally occupied by Israel. He further added that Syria is currently not in favour of any military conflict with Israel. Syria wants a strong security framework to be prepared that can find a peaceful solution to the current crisis. It is worth noting that this statement from the Syrian President came at a time when Bashar al-Assad's government was overthrown in December 2024, after which Israel has continuously been infiltrating and conducting military operations in the region of southern Syria.

Ahmad Al-Sharaa has also made it clear that Syria has no intention of

intervening militarily in favour of the government there in Lebanon. Conversely, they currently want to talk with the Lebanese administration to find a path that helps Lebanon emerge from its current crisis. He mentioned that several areas of southern Lebanon are under Israeli control, where war has been ongoing between Hezbollah and the Israeli army for the past several months. The

Lebanese government has been making efforts to free areas from Israeli control and for the disarmament of Hezbollah.

Ahmad Al-Sharaa specially emphasised that Syria is in favour of weapons being taken back from non-governmental organisations in Lebanon that possess them. The legal right to hold weapons should only rest with the Lebanese military. He said that this step is highly likely to improve relations between Israel and Syria.

Inquilab (July 26) reports that the United Nations Secretary General António Guterres has made a historic visit to Syria. Notably, this is the first time since the start of the civil war in Syria that a top UN official has visited the country. According to Syria's official news agency SANA, Syrian foreign minister Amjad Al-Shaalani welcomed the high-level UN delegation at Damascus airport. Media reports indicate that the UN Secretary General will hold high-level talks with the government there to address reconstruction and the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

Assassination of Sunni religious leader in Iran



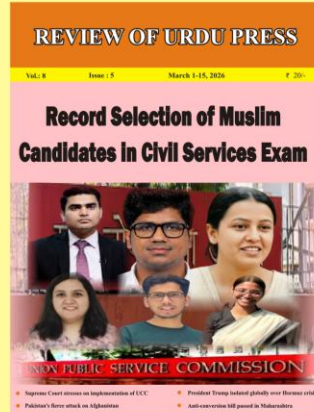
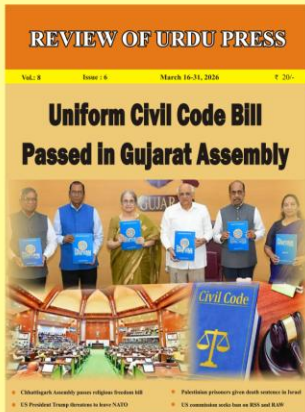
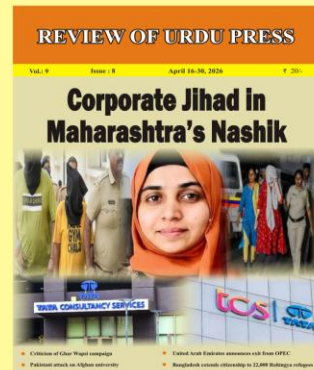
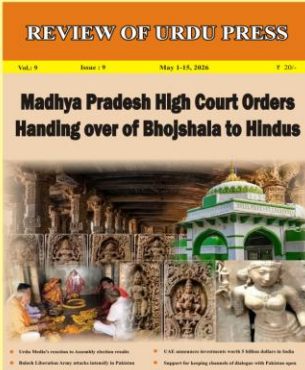
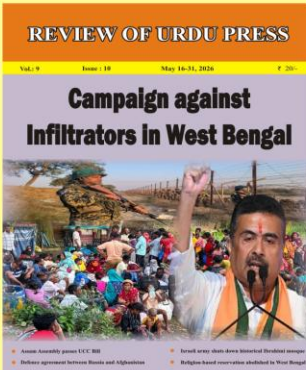
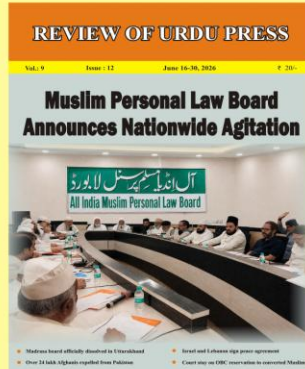
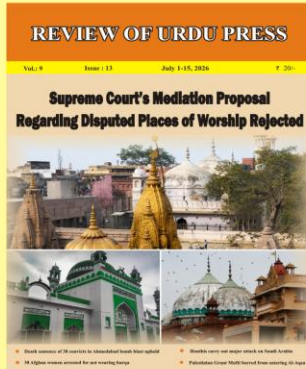
Urdu Times (July 21) reports that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) strongly condemned the assassination of the world-renowned Sunni cleric Sheikh Mohammad Anwar Risi in the country's south-eastern region.

The IRGC alleged that this assassination was carried out by Zionist and US agents with the intention of inciting Shia-Sunni riots in Iran. According to Iran's official news agency, Tasnim, some unidentified attackers shot and killed Sheikh Mohammad Anwar Risi in a mosque in the city of Mirjaveh in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province.

Iran's intelligence department has launched a high-level investigation into this murder. It is reported that Risi was

shot and killed while he was offering prayers in the mosque. Following this, the government of Iran appealed to the country's citizens to maintain peace so that they do not fall prey to rumours spread by enemies. It is significant to note that Sunni Muslims of the Baloch tribe live in large numbers in Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan province. Sunnis make up about 80 per cent of the total population of this region.

This province shares its borders with Pakistan's Balochistan province and is considered the most backward region of Iran. An armed conflict has been ongoing in this area for several years between Shias and the Sunni terrorist organisation Jaish al-Adl.



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