

# REVIEW OF URDU PRESS

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## Bihar Elections Amid Corona Pandemic



- Attempt to Create Riots in Delhi During Muharram Foiled
- Shia-Sunni Conflict in Pakistan
- Chances of Civil War in Saudi Arabia
- Demand to Reconstruct the Tomb of Bibi Fatima

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## Bihar elections amid Corona pandemic

### Urdu newspapers have criticised Election Commission's decision to hold assembly polls in Bihar amid the pandemic

**Roznama Rashtriya Sahara** (September 26) in its editorial has warned that the elections in Bihar may lead to a “massive spike in corona cases” in the state. The newspaper also said that many good leaders had succumbed to the virus, which was contracting approximately one lakh people per day. “If elections are held amid such situation, the virus will affect many more people and if that happens, it will be an unforgettable event in the history of the country.” The editorial points out that the Election Commission, however, had taken several steps to mitigate the crisis. As per reports, nearly 6 lakh PPE kits would be handed over to the state electoral office apart from distribution of 46 lakh masks. Six lakh face shields would also be distributed. The commission had also promised to arrange over 23 lakh gloves and distribute hand sanitizers in large quantity. The commission had also made it clear that more than five persons would not be allowed in a group to visit households as part of election campaign. Also, only upto 1,000 people would be allowed to cast their vote in one polling booth. “The polling will be held from 7am to 6pm. It is difficult to say how many people would come forward to exercise their franchise in such a situation, especially because Bihar belongs to the category of states known for their poor medical facilities.”

The newspaper also demanded that “after the Bihar elections, testing for Corona should be conducted on a wider scale in the state. Hospitals and doctors should get enhanced facilities. India is already number two in the number of Corona cases in the world.”

“Is it necessary to hold elections in one of the biggest states in such testing times?” it asked. “Even Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora had admitted that holding of similar elections were withheld in at least 70 countries across the world,” the editorial pointed out.

**Inquilab** (September 26) has titled its editorial “It is political spring in Bihar amid the autumn season of Corona.”

The newspaper, expressing its concern on the worrying situation, said: “There is a very serious crisis in the country. Instead of being on the downward slide, Corona cases are increasing on a daily basis. We don’t know the reasons for not avoiding the polls at this point of time. Currently there are nearly 1.75 lakh Corona patients in the state and their number is increasing daily. The devastating floods, destruction of railway lines and bridges and the collapse of dams have made the life of people miserable. Instead of helping people to mitigate their troubles, the Election Commission has foisted the election process on them. The main reason for this decision is the feeling of BJP that it can win more than 200 seats in alliance with Nitish Kumar if elections are held now,” the editorial said.

“The other reason for conducting the polls at this point of time is that many leaders in the opposition are opposed to holding elections. Hence the government felt that holding of elections would help to further corner the opposition. The central government and the BJP might be day-dreaming about their victory in the elections but their enthusiasm will go up in the rising Corona flames and Tejashwi Yadav might emerge as the top leader of the secular front in the state. The BJP should also remember that RJD had emerged as the biggest party in the previous assembly elections. When RJD contested elections in alliance with Nitish Kumar, they emerged victorious in 180 seats. However, due to the breach of trust by Nitish Kumar, the alliance collapsed and Nitish once again joined those people from whom he had promised to keep himself away. Yes, this is politics. Here all the paths circulate around the chair. There is no point in complaining against anyone as everybody is after power. The only thing that we have to wait and see is how many people will be ready to risk their lives in the midst of the pandemic to come out and vote. Some arrangements have been made to overcome the situation. But will these things help stop the pandemic in its path? Our leaders haven’t taken the pandemic seriously even for a single day. Once a Union minister shouted “Go Corona Go” while the Prime

Minister said the Mahabharat war ended in 18 days and the Corona would also disappear in 21 days.”

“The irony is that when there was not a single Corona patient in 90% of the cities, the country went into a tight lockdown and people feared to venture out even for basic needs. Now when the country is number two in the world in Corona cases, we have removed all restrictions,” said the editorial.

**Siasat** (September 26) too has come out against the Election Commission’s decision to hold assembly polls in Bihar. The newspaper stated that at a time when the Corona virus is spreading fast, the commission launched the election process and most political parties too have got busy with it. Did the ruling front take enough precautions and prepare for the elections? Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, meanwhile, has succeeded in bringing some opposition leaders to his party and thereby managed to dent the opposition alliance’s strength. He has also managed to separate Jitan Ram Manjhi from the RJD-Congress alliance. The opposition is yet to make enough preparations which they ought to have made by now. The forthcoming polls are also important in the sense that in the previous election, though people had given their mandate to an alliance, Nitish Kumar cheated them and jumped the fence to form an alliance with BJP. Hence this time the people of Bihar have to protect their interests, ensure prosperity of the state and decide its future.

Holding the Rashtriya Janata Dal on a higher pedestal, the newspaper observed that there is a direct clash between communal and secular politics in Bihar. In fact, RJD is the only party in the country which has never compromised on its principles. The voters of Bihar maintain a high political awareness. They have to think about their future before taking a decision. They already know that Nitish Kumar is capable of joining hands with anyone to keep his chair intact. The Muslim voters of Bihar should know that RJD is the only party capable of stopping BJP on its path. Those who dance to the tunes of others and cheat people by changing their political stand should be taught a lesson, the newspaper said.

**Mumbai Urdu News** (September 26) in its editorial said the opposition parties had pleaded before the Supreme Court to postpone the elections in Bihar due to the spike in Corona cases. However, the plea has failed to move the court. Dismissing the petition, the court said that elections cannot be postponed due to the pandemic and the court would not interfere in the decision of the Election Commission. Also, the notification for the elections had already been issued. Those who were tested positive for Corona can also cast their vote and special polling booths will be set up to help them. Interestingly, both nominations papers and affidavits can be filed online this time. The surety amount can also be filed online. However, only two persons will be allowed apart from the candidate at the filing of nominations before the electoral officer. Besides, nobody will be allowed to shake hands with others during the entire election process. In a press conference, Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora had announced that more than 7 crore people would participate in the elections being held for the 243 assembly seats in Bihar. Only a maximum of 1,000 people would be allowed to cast their vote in one polling booth.

“In any case, the voters are not happy with the performance of Nitish Kumar government. Even then why the ruling alliance is hell bent on participating in the polls amid the Corona wave? Only the BJP and JD (U) can give an answer to this question. Nitish Kumar hasn’t fulfilled even one out of the seven poll promises that he had made before the elections. The departure of UpendraKushwaha from Mahagathbandhantoo seems to have little effect on the alliance,” the editorial said.

“Wake up Bihari, be ready for people’s rule this time,” tweeted LaluYadav. Lalu is admitted to a hospital in Ranchi and hence he will not be able to participate in the election process, it added.

**Qaumi Tanzeem** (September 27) in its editorial has appealed to the voters of Bihar to exercise their franchise with caution as the future of the country depends on whom they choose as their representative. The newspaper expressed regret that people often tend to select a wrong candidate from their own caste or religion instead of electing the most

eligible person. Such decisions would have a far reaching consequences in the society and the country in general, it pointed out.

**Sahafat** (September 27) claims that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been running the election campaign in Bihar for the past 10 days through All India Radio. The PM has been highlighting development works worth billions of rupees through his speeches. These are all related to Bihar. If the assurances of the PM are taken on face value, then Bihar will soon become a developed state. “The moot question is how much these assurances would have an effect on the people’s mind in Bihar and determine the outcome of the polls. Meanwhile, another storm has been unleashed. The problems of farmers have aggravated further and even a Union minister resigned from her post over the issue,” the newspaper said.

“There is one more issue—how the JD(U) and BJP decide on the seat sharing formula. Earlier, the feeling was that Nitish Kumar would get a walkover. The situation seems to have changed now. Though Lalu Prasad Yadav is not in the fray, he seems to be a major factor in deciding the outcome of the polls. The RJD is confident of securing Muslim votes. Nearly 30% voters in Bihar are Muslims. It is interesting to note that in 2015, JD(U), Congress and the RJD combine had won the elections but Kurmi leader Nitish Kumar displayed opportunistic politics by entering into a nexus with BJP. Even today, he believes that the saffron party would help him win the elections,” states the editorial.

**Akhbar-E-Mashriq** (September 27) in its editorial has said that the elections in Bihar is the biggest such exercise amid the Corona pandemic in the country. “The contest is between NDA and RJD. The Mahagathbandhan seems to have become lazy now. The NDA has the support of non-Yadav OBCs and the upper castes. The BJP will also try to cash in on the Ram Mandir construction in Ayodhya. This apart, the suicide of Sushant Singh Rajput in Mumbai and the return of Bihari labourers from other states are also factors that will determine the poll outcome. What we need to know is whether the people of Bihar have got tired of the governance of Nitish Kumar. In Bihar, electoral battles are always fought on caste lines. In such a situation, the votes of Muslims are a determining factor.”

“Another question is whether the Corona pandemic will have a bearing on the poll outcome. Issues like lockdown, return of labourers and NDA’s inability to find a solution to economic crisis will definitely affect the prospects of NDA. On the other hand, the differences in Mahagathbandhan over making Tejashwi Yadav as the chief ministerial candidate can’t be ignored. In such a situation, it is clear that no party or alliance would be able to score a huge victory and the contest would be a tight one.”

## **Efforts to show Adivasis as distinct from Hindu society**

**Inquilab** (September 19) has claimed that in Madhya Pradesh, the Adivasis are enrolling themselves as non-Hindus in the Census, raising the hackles of Vishwa Hindu Parishad and RSS. “The two organisations have accused the Christian missionaries and Leftists of trying to separate Adivasis from the Hindu community. The Adivasis, on the other hand, are facing another crisis. Their every movement is dubbed as Naxal activity. The government and the administration deal with Adivasis as if they are all Naxalites. The best example of this attitude is the incident that took place on September 6. In Balaghat district, an Adivasi youth named Cham Singh and his friend went to catch fish from a river. However, he was killed in a police firing. The state police headquarters formed a Special Investigation Team to probe the matter and the human rights commission sought a report from the DGP on the incident,” states the newspaper.

“Instead of resolving the discriminations being faced by the Adivasis, the Hindu organisations are targeting Christian missionaries and Leftists. The Sangh and VHP have decided to start a nationwide campaign against Christian missionaries and Leftists. The Sangh is also claiming that Adivasis are descendants of demon king Baali. However, Baali was an Adivasi and not a Hindu. The Sangh is busy creating such literature that makes Adivasis Hindus. The Hindu organisations are claiming that Christian

missionaries and Leftists are trying to separate nearly 12 crore Adivasis in the country from the Hindu society,” says the newspaper.

Even after publishing this inflammatory opinion, the newspaper was not satisfied. The editor of the paper, Shakeel Shamsi, wrote another editorial on September 25 on the same topic. In this piece, he claims that “there are nearly 12 crore Adivasis in the country who have been living in the jungles and deserts all these years. Their lifestyle, belief system, social setup and food are different from other Hindustanis. They don’t worship any deities or devatas. There are no Brahmins or Purohits who do puja for them. Ordinary Hindus understand that Adivasis are not Hindus. The Adivasis also claim that they are not Hindus. They do not accept the religious texts of Hindus. The Adivasis who stay in different parts of the country are known by their different names. They include the Sarna, Santhal, Munda and Gond tribes. The regrettable part is that both VHP and RSS are putting pressure on the Adivasis to identify themselves as Hindus.”

“The government of India has marked Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Jain and Buddhist in the religious column in Census but there is no mention of Adivasis. Last year, the Adivasis had organised a massive rally in Delhi and declared that they would not identify themselves as Hindus in the Census. However, the government has refused to buy their arguments. The RSS and VHP have accused the Muslims and Christians of misguiding the Adivasis. Both the organisations have long been demanding that the Adivasis should identify themselves as Hindus and not otherwise,” says the editorial.

Shakeel Shamsi has claimed that the Sangh Parivar, despite their best efforts, have failed to make Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists a part of Hindu society. “Hence they are concentrating their full strength on the Adivasis. In an event organized by the RSS in Bhopal some time ago, the leaders of both RSS and VHP expressed concern that a campaign has been unleashed among Adivasis that they should not identify themselves as Hindus. The meeting had resolved that they would make every effort to defeat this campaign. Literature has been prepared to achieve this aim. The question

that arises here is who has given the power to the SanghParivar to decide on who belongs to which religion,” says Shasmi.

## Attempt to create riots in Delhi during Muharram foiled

Various Shia organisations in the country had sought permission from the Supreme Court to take out tazia processions during Muharram. However, the court had refused to grant them permission. Islamic channel **Hindustan TV**, on the occasion of Muharram, aired the statement of Bahadur Abbas, the manager of Dargah Shah-e-Mardan, by adding more masala to it. Bahadur Abbas had apparently accused the Delhi Police of putting pressure on him to announce that the court had restrained the devotees from visiting the dargah and read Marsiya. He also apparently claimed that the police told him that if he failed to do so, they would kill him in encounter.

His statement went viral on social media and rumours also started spreading that roads had been blocked to prevent people from visiting various Shia dargahsin different parts of Delhi. However, the Delhi Police had only stopped him from forcibly reaching the dargah. The sole aim of creating this rift between Muslims and police was to start a clash. However, the commissioner of police and other senior officials explained the matter to the people and sent them back home. Thus the efforts of the opposition parties to create riots in Delhi was foiled on time.

## Cases against foreign Tablighis in Mumbai withdrawn

**Inquilab** (September 21) reported that the Mumbai Police had told a local court that the attempt-to -murder cases registered against 20 foreign TablighiJamaat members would be withdrawn. These cases were registered at D N Nagar police station in April this year against 10 members each from Indonesia and Kazakhstan. The foreign Tablighis had challenged the FIR in a Sessions Court. The judge then directed the lower court to complete the hearing in the cases within a month so that the foreigners can return to their country. The lawyer appearing for the accused complained that despite the high court directing that the hearing in the cases shall be completed within a month, this was not done and the hearings were postponed again and again. The Bandra police had admitted in the court that there were not enough evidence against the accused. The court however said that the case filed for violation of Visa rules will remain. Earlier, the Aurangabad bench of Bombay High Court had dropped the cases filed against the TablighiJamaat members.

## Haj money to be returned

**Qaumi Tanzeem** (September 27),quoting Union minister for minority affairs,Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, said that the Rs 2,100 crore collected from Haj pilgrims would be returned to them without any deductions due to cancellation of pilgrimage. In a meeting held at the Haj House, Naqvi also said that the Saudi Arabian government had started preparations for the Haj pilgrimage in 2021. He informed that in the past 3 years, Rs 514 crorewere returned to the Haj pilgrims. He expressed hope that the Saudi government would soon make the announcement for next year's pilgrimage. The Indian government is in touch with the Saudi government on the issue. He also said that a new Haj House would be constructed in Mumbai. The Maharashtra government has allotted a plot to the Haj Committee in Navi Mumbai for the purpose.

## Shia-Sunni conflict in Pakistan

**Inquilab** (September 19) has published an article authored by Pakistani journalist ArzooKazmi, who admitted that Shia-Sunni violence is on the rise in her country. In Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad, lakhs of people held a protest demanding that Shias be declared as Kafirs. This has never happened in Pakistan. Looks like Sunnis have been let loose against Shias to create a conflict and divert the attention of people from the corruption charges against Army. When Islam came into existence as a religion there was no concept of Shias and Sunnis, neither there was any mention in Quran about different sects among Muslims. Later when Shia and Sunni sects came into existence, but even then there was no hatred between them. The strange thing is that both believe in Quran and the Prophet. Both call themselves Muslims. One fails to understand the logic behind the demand to declare one group as Kafirs.

Pakistan's neighbouring country Iran is a Shia majority nation while Saudi Arabia is a Sunni nation. Pakistan has relations with both the countries. But compared to Iran, Pakistan maintains a closer relationship with Saudi Arabia. Tensions between Iran and Saudi often flare up, forcing Pakistan to take sides with Saudi. However, Pakistan also takes care not to offend Iran. If the Shia-Sunni conflict is not checked, Pakistan's relationship with Iran may get spoiled. This time the situation in Pakistan is quite serious. Police stations have become centres of corruption while justice is bartered in courts. Treachery and favouritism have become the order of the day. Masjids have become the personal property of some people. One sect is not willing to sit behind another for namaz. Earlier, Ahmadiyyas were branded as Kafirs. Now Shias have become the target. Among the Sunnis, there is a rift between Barelvis and Deobandis. The Mullah-Maulvis among Shias and Sunnis are pitching the sects against each other for their self-aggrandisement. The Shia-Sunni conflict is capable of destroying the country. The economy of Pakistan is already in shambles. If riots take place between Sunnis and Shias in Pakistan, India too cannot

escape from its turbulence. This is because Shias are a big community in India too.

The seeds of this conflict were laid by Pakistan itself. Violence has become part of people's life in Pakistan and they are always in a mood to finish off those who do not listen to their words. Due to this thought process, everyone in Pakistan thinks of the other as a Kafir. Every Muslim has become an enemy of the other. This insane thinking has spread in the country. It is been said that everyone has to do Roza (fasting) in the country. Those who do not observe Roza are not considered as Muslims. The Shia-Sunni conflict has brought trouble to Pakistan government. Imran Khan's government has become very weak. His government has been enjoying the pleasures of the power for some time now. So far he has failed to do any welfare activity for people. Hence a sizable section of the society is trying to remove him. The fire arising out of the Shia-Sunni conflict shall be extinguished at any cost.

## **Restrictions on Azaan lifted in Germany**

**Inquilab** (September 25) has reported that the restrictions imposed on Azaan in mosques have been removed by a court in western Germany. As per information, a Christian man has approached a local court claiming that the Azaan from mosques was an interference in his religious freedom. Following this petition, restrictions were imposed on Azaan in mosques in Germany in 2018. Various Muslim organisations had challenged the restrictions imposed on Azaan in the higher court. They contested the claim by saying that Azaan from mosques does not interfere in the religious freedom of Christians and that the restrictions were in contravention of the guarantee of religious freedom enshrined in the Constitution of Germany.

## **Inquiry report on terrorist attack in Peshawar Army School**

**RoznamaRashtriya Sahara** (September 26) has reported that the Pakistan government had handed over the inquiry report on the terrorist attack on Army Public School in Peshawar to the Supreme Court. Nearly 200 children were killed in the attack. The Supreme Court had set up an inquiry commission to look into this massacre nearly six years ago. The judicial inquiry commission was headed by Justice Mohammad Ibrahim Khan. The inquiry commission had blamed the poor security system in the country for the attack. In a 500-page report, the commission had pointed fingers at the lax security system at the school and said that despite rising terrorist attacks, the school administration chose to reduce the number of security personnel in the school.

The report says that the terrorists entered the school compound from its backside. Nobody stopped them. Those who were deployed in the school as security personnel fled from the spot even without firing a single shot. The chief justice of the Supreme Court, Gulzar Ahmad, has directed that the report shall be made public. He stated that the security agencies in Pakistan had failed to warn the administration about the possibility of such attacks.

## **Chances of civil war in Saudi Arabia**

**Media Star World** (September 25) has stated that due to the declining health of the ruler of Saudi Arabia, King Salman, an intense power struggle has been going on within the royal family to take over the reins of the country. “In May 2017, when Mohammad bin Salman took over as the Crown Prince, he arrested nearly 300 powerful people related to the Saudi royal family and kept them in custody for more than a year. They were released only when they gave a written assurance that they would not

make any claims in the royal succession. This apart, their properties worth billions of dollars were seized. Among the princes who were arrested include 33 princes who were appointed to the supreme advisory council by King Abdullah in 2008,” it states.

“According to those familiar with the Arab world, ever since Turkey gave political asylum to Saudi princes, the rift between the two countries started widening. Last year, there was a rift within the countries of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Some 22 countries held a meeting in Malaysia under the leadership of Turkey. Nearly one month later, Saudi Arabia organized a meeting in Riyadh in which 24 Islamic countries took part. Interestingly, Pakistan and Qatar are the two Islamic nations that participated in both the meetings. Opinion is divided among Arab countries over US pressure to start diplomatic relationship with Israel. The relationship between Saudi Arabia and Israel has been improving slowly. According to sources, along with US, now Russia is also interfering in Arab world. In an effort to put pressure on the oil trade of Saudi Arabia, Russia has increased its production of oil, resulting in a fall in the prices of petroleum products in international market and thereby pushing Saudi Arabia into a financial crisis.

**Weekly Nai Dunia**, published from Delhi, in its March 29 edition, has given some details about the power struggle that has been continuing in the Saudi royal family for a long time. The newspaper has alleged that whatever Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman has been doing, the hands of US and Israel are visible behind it. “Saudi Arabia has been trying to improve its relations with Israel. This is the reason behind the advice of the Imam of Ka’aba mosque telling people of Saudi Arabia to maintain respectable relationship with Jews,” says the weekly.

In another article in the same newspaper, it has been claimed that in 1744, the founder of the current royal family of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Saud bin Mohammad, had befriended renowned Sunni scholar and propagator of Wahabism, Mohammad bin Abdul Wahab. In 1818, the Saud family was defeated by the Turks. In 1902, Abdulazizbin Al Saud, with the help of Britain, captured the power in Riyadh. In 1918, the British defeated the

Ottoman Empire in Turkey. Soon, Abdulaziz bin Al Saud captured Ka'aba and declared himself as the King. In order to tighten his hold on the empire, he married the daughters of the chieftains of 32 different tribes. Currently, there are more than 200 powerful princes in the Saudi royal family.

“King Abdulaziz bin Al Saud had 45 sons. He passed away in 1953 and his son Saud bin Abdulaziz ascended the throne. In 1957, King Saud visited US and signed a defence treaty with the country. In 1964, a revolt took place and his step brother Faizal captured the power. In 1975, Faizal was murdered by his nephew and Khalid became the new ruler. He appointed his younger brother Abdullah as the Crown Prince. In 2005, Abdullah became the King and in 2015, when he passed away, his step brother Salman bin Abdulaziz captured power. Currently, it is being said that he is not keeping well and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman has been running the show. Now attempts are being made to capture power from him as well,” says the article.

## **Fresh sanctions on Iran likely**

**Inquilab** (September 20) reports that the US has decided to impose fresh sanctions on Iran. US President's advisor on Iranian issues, Elliot Abrams, had stated that the US would re-impose all the sanctions on Iran and the directions for the same have been given by the United Nations. Earlier, in 2015, the US had lifted the sanctions imposed on Iran. The US, however, had announced that the restrictions imposed on selling arms and weapons to Iran would continue.

According to the newspaper, 13 out of the total 15 members of the UN Security Council had opposed the decision of the US. Five years ago, Iran had assured US, Britain, China, Russia, France and Germany that it would curtail its nuclear testing ability, following an understanding with these countries. On the assurance of Iran, the UN had announced lifting of sanctions. However, two years ago, the President of US refused to acknowledge the above understanding between Iran and other countries.

## Bonhomie between Arab nations and Israel

**Inquilab** (September 13) reported that the UAE had announced starting of diplomatic relations with Israel. A few days later, the US President declared that Israel and Bahrain would also formalize a diplomatic tie-up. On this occasion, the ruler of Bahrain, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa has also signed an agreement with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington.

Earlier, Israel had diplomatic relationship with only two Islamic countries. While Egypt had signed a diplomatic tie-up with Israel in 1979, Jordan established formal ties with the Jewish nation in 1994.

The newspaper claims that the latest treaty would have a direct bearing on the US Presidential elections soon. It also quotes the statement of Iran condemning the decision of Israel and Bahrain to formalise diplomatic ties. According to Iran, it would lead to instability in the Persian Gulf region. The spokesperson of Iran's foreign affairs ministry also claimed that the treaty was the result of the pressure exerted by the President of the United States.

**Inquilab** (September 14) has pointed out that many Turkish and Palestinian organisations too had criticised the decision of some Arab countries to open diplomatic relationship with Israel. The Palestinian Authority alleged that they had been stabbed on their back. Turkey said that the treaty would give validity to Israel's grabbing of land from Arab countries. Militant organisation Hamas has declared that it would increase its attacks on Israel. Palestinian terror organisation Al Fatah too promised to increase its efforts to liberate the lands occupied by Israel.

**Roznama Rashtriya Sahara** (September 11) has said that though Palestine has brought a proposal in Arab League to pass a resolution criticising the diplomatic tie-up between UAE and Israel, the Arab League has rejected the proposal. A spokesman has said that the matter was not discussed in the meeting of the League because there were differences of opinion among Arab countries on the issue.

## **Demand to reconstruct the tomb of Bibi Fatima**

**Inqilab** (September 18) has said that a signature campaign has been going on at international level seeking the reconstruction of the tomb of Bibi Fatima, daughter of Hazrat Mohammad, located in the historic cemetery JannatulBaqi in Saudi Arabia. In 1925, the Wahabi rulers of Saudi Arabia had destroyed the tombs of Bibi Fatima, her sons and other relatives of Hazrat Mohammad located in Medina. As per the Wahabi tradition in Islam, the tombs have to remain open and there should not be any constructions over it. From 1925 till date, the Shias from across the world have been protesting against the destruction of such tombs. Nearly 1.5 lakh Shia Muslims in India have recently signed a memorandum urging the Saudi government to reconstruct these historic cemeteries and said that if the government is not willing to do so, then they were ready to spend money from their own pockets for their reconstruction.

One Shia organisation has demanded that the memorandum shall be handed over to Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi to ask him to raise the issue in Parliament. A copy of the petition has been handed over to External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar. The chairman of the campaigning committee Al Ezaz Mohammad RazaAbadi and Syed Ali HussainZaidi have told reporters that a signature campaign has been launched across the country. A similar campaign is going on in other countries too.

## **Pakistan to open trade centres on Iran and Afghanistan borders**

**Inquilab** (September 20) reports that Pakistan has decided to open 18 trade centres on Iran and Afghanistan border to boost its trade relationship with both countries. According to Pakistan government sources, the decision would help restore peace in the region. The government said that 12 trade centres would be set up on Afghanistan border and six on Iranian border. All the trade centres will be located within Pakistan's territory and their construction would be completed by next year.