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Uproar over Petition for Removal of Disputed Islamic Verses



- Conflict in Congress over Alliance with Siddiqui
- Switzerland Imposes Ban on Wearing of Burqa
- Indications from Pope's Iraq Visit
- Telangana Waqf Board's Income Increased

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Summary

Syed Wasim Rizvi, former head of the Uttar Pradesh Shia Waqf Board, always remains embroiled in one controversy or the other. Recently, he has filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking the removal of the 26 disputed verses from the Quran, in which the killing of non-Muslims and the seizing of their assets are justified by citing Sharia. In his petition he has stated that these verses were not part of the original Quran and have since been added to it. These verses are against the spirit of the Quran which espouses peace, goodwill and communal harmony. He has claimed that these verses are likely to lead to communal unrest and violence and also threaten the national unity and integrity of the country. So, he requested the court to issue directions to remove the disputed verses from the Quran. As soon as he filed this petition, there were huge protests in the Muslim society against him. According to newspapers, his effigies were burnt at various places and there were demands for his arrest. Several Muslim organisations have also announced that they will challenge his petition in the Supreme Court. Muslim scholars have said that no court, government or any other organisation has the right to make any changes in the Quran. They also said that anyone who doubts any part of the Quran is automatically banished from Islam. Therefore, Wasim Rizvi has no connection with Islam anymore. However, Chandmal Chopra of Kolkata and Indrasen of Delhi had previously also taken up the matter in the courts. But the Muslims consider the present form of the Quran to be final, in which no modification or change can be made.

In the global scenario, Christians and Muslims are trying to mend their relations by forgetting hundreds of years of hostility. Pope Francis, the main religious leader of Catholic Church, is quite active in this endeavour. In 2019, for the first time in Christian history, the Pope paid an official visit to several Arab countries. After this, the Pope had instructed that Christian clergy should not indulge in conversion in Arab Muslim countries. Recently the Pope paid a three-day visit to Iraq. For the first time in the history of Christianity, after meeting with the President and Prime Minister of Iraq, the Pope broke all traditions to meet Ayatollah Sistani, the Grand Leader of the Shia Muslims, at his house.

Before the West Bengal assembly elections, the Pir of Furfura Sharif, the famous dargah of the state, turned down the offer to join hands with Majlis Ittehadul Muslimeen president Asaduddin Owaisi and instead, formed a new political party, Indian Secular Front, and made an electoral alliance with the Left parties and the Congress. It remains the centre of discussion and criticism in newspapers.

Majlis had also made its presence known in the elections of Gujarat Municipal Corporation. For the first time, Owaisi's party won seven seats in Ahmedabad. The party had fielded its candidates in 21 seats in this election. Till now, it has spread its footprints in four other states besides Telangana. However, it did not get any success in the elections of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh.



Uproar over petition for removal of disputed Islamic verses



According to **Mumbai Urdu News** (March 12), former Uttar Pradesh Shia Waqf Board Chairman Syed Wasim Rizvi has filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking removal of 26 disputed verses from the Quran. He has said that these verses pose a threat to the unity and integrity of the country and they should be removed. He also claimed that these 26 verses were added later. According to the news published in the newspaper, the petition claimed that after the death of Prophet Muhammad, the first Caliph Hazrat Abu Bakr, had asked four people to compile the teachings of Allah in the form of a book. Till then, the knowledge emanating from Hazrat Muhammed was passed on orally and in a hereditary manner. The first Caliph entrusted this responsibility to those who lived with Hazrat Muhammed. According to Asal Bukhari, Abi bin Kaif, Mu'az bin Jubal, Zahid bin Sabith and Abu Zahid were asked to take up this task. At this time, Zahid bin Sabith was given the responsibility of writing down verses from the Hafiz Quran (those who memorised the Quran) by listening to three other people. The Quran was written and handed over to Hazrat Hafsa, the fourth wife of Hazrat

Muhammed and daughter of the second Caliph Hazrat Umar. During the period of Third Caliph Hazrat Usman, more than 300 versions of Quran written by different people came into existence. Then Caliph Hazrat Usman asked Hazrat Zahid bin Sabith, the author of the original copy of the Quran, to demand from Hazrat Hafsa to put together a copy of the actual book with the help of his colleagues Abdullah bin Jabir, Zahid bin Ilyas and Abdul Rahman bin Haris. At this time, there was a campaign going on to spread Islam with the help of the sword.

Wasim Rizvi has argued that these 26 verses were added later. These verses are contrary to the basic values of humanity. These verses are based on hatred and they encourage violence, murder and bloodshed. The petition also claimed that when there was a campaign to spread Islam more strongly during the Third Caliphate, many forms of Quran were prevalent in the Islamic world. According to Asal Bukhari, during this time, the third Caliph Hazrat Usman published a copy of the old Quran and other forms of Quran prevailing at the time were declared invalid. The copy of the Quran, prepared by the Third Caliph, is the

one that is recognised and practiced to this date.

The petitioner has questioned how can Allah say the words of these 26 verses that promote slaughter, violence, hatred and terrorism when He has spoken of brotherhood, love, goodwill, justice and equality in the entire Quran? By taking the help of these verses, Muslim youth are being brainwashed. They are being instigated, lured and encouraged in the name of jihad. It is due to these that there is a threat to the unity and integrity of the country. Before the petition was filed, Rizvi sent the actual question and the document related to the petition to 56 registered Islamic organisations, institutions, *jamaats*, and madrasas across the country and asked them to clarify their views. But nobody responded. The Supreme Court is likely to consider the petition next week.

Strong opposition to the petition by Rizvi

As soon as the demand for the removal of 26 disputed verses from the Quran was raised, there has been a lot of protests and uproar in Muslim society against the move. According to reports in Urdu newspapers, effigies of Wasim Rizvi are being burned at various places and there are demands being raised for his arrest.

According to **Mumbai Urdu News** (March 13), Raza Academy in Mumbai has decided to challenge Wasim Rizvi's petition in the Supreme Court. The founder of the academy, Mohammed Saeed Noori, told reporters in Mumbai that Wasim Rizvi has been involved in plotting riots in the country since the beginning. Now he has crossed all limits and has made Quran his target. Noori said that he will also go to court to protect the Quran. He added that Wasim Rizvi is trying to create tensions between different communities in the country and he should be arrested.

The **Daily Inqilab** has published six stories in its March 13 issue against Wasim Rizvi. According to a news report, a written complaint has been lodged against Wasim Rizvi in Nizamuddin police station

(Delhi), alleging that he is trying to destroy the Muslim unity of the country by provoking the sentiments of the people. At the same time, the effigy of Wasim Rizvi was burnt during a protest that was held in Nizamuddin.

According to another news, Maulana Wali Rahmani, General Secretary of the Muslim Personal Law Board has said that his organisation will oppose Rizvi's petition in the court. He said that no one has the right to make any changes in the Quran. In such cases, all sections of Muslims stand united and there is no difference of opinion among them. Another news also said that this petition was filed by Wasim Rizvi after taking money to appease the RSS and the Jews.

The newspaper has also published an editorial in this context stating that the Quran is given by Allah and He is its protector. After this clear declaration, if a cunning person tries to betray Islam at the behest of enemy forces, then he may succeed in causing hurt to Muslims but will not be able to harm the Quran. The editorial expressed hope that the Supreme Court will throw this petition in the trash can.

Roznama Sahara (March 13) has also published several news reports in this context, stating that more than a dozen scholars of Islam have issued a Fatwa saying that the Quran will remain as it is till the very end. No court or government has the right to make any changes in it. According to another news, in many places in western Uttar Pradesh, Muslims condemned Wasim Rizvi and burned his effigies.

According to **Avadhnama** (March 13), Shia Personal Law Board spokesperson Maulana Yasuf Abbas condemned Wasim Rizvi's petition and said that it is against Islam and Shias. He added that Wasim Rizvi had already been banished from the Shia community.

According to **Qaumi Tanzeem** (March 13), the chairman of the Bihar Shia Waqf Board, commenting on the petition of Wasim Rizvi, described him as anti-

Muslim and anti-Shia and called him the Salman Rushdie of India.

According to the **Mumbai Urdu News** (March 13), Majlis Ulema-e-Hind's General Secretary and noted Shia scholar Maulana Kalbe Jawad has called Wasim Rizvi shameless and nefarious and has appealed to Muslims across the country to demand his arrest. Wasim Rizvi has no connection with Islam and Shias. He condemned the statement of Islam's enemy Rizvi in which he spoke of removing 26 disputed verses from the Quran.

Mumbai Urdu News has in its March 13 editorial said that even before this some people had raised the demand for changes to be made in the Quran. Chandmal Chopra is an example of this. He had also made the same demand and the court had thrown the application on his face. But there is a big difference between Chandmal Chopra and Wasim Rizvi. Chandmal Chopra was a non-Muslim and Wasim Rizvi is a Muslim. Wasim Rizvi has himself rejected Islam by seeking revision in the Quran. The newspaper also alleged that Rizvi is a puppet in the hands of some people and is defaming Islam and Quran.

Etemaad (March 13) has published a news on its main page titled 'Outrage in Muslim society over the betrayal of Wasim Rizvi and defamation of Islam'. Muslim Personal Law Board and Raza Academy are preparing to go to court to protect the Quran. Demands for arrest of Rizvi have been raised by all sections of Muslims. The newspaper has also alleged that Rizvi is trying to make different sections of society fight amongst themselves.

According to **Avadhnama** (13 March), Majlis-e-Ulema Khutba (Bihar) General Secretary Maulana Amanat Hussain, and President of Falahi Trust Maulana Murad Raza, in a joint communique condemned Wasim Rizvi's act, and urged Muslims to take strict action against it. Wasim Rizvi has no connection with the Shia community and the entire Shia community has already announced its boycott. This infamous person is acting in such a manner to avoid arrest.

Analysing the controversy of Wasim Rizvi in its March 13 issue, **Mumbai Urdu News** said that it is now clear that Wasim Rizvi is not a Muslim. When a person suspects a single verse of the Quran, he becomes an infidel. How then can Rizvi who has spewed venom against many verses, still remain a Muslim? The article appealed to the Muslims to boycott Rizvi. The traitor Rizvi is out to destroy the verses of the Quran. He has waged a war against Allah. He will get consumed in this fight and it will result in his death. He is an abusive person involved in fraud, scams and criminal matters. Therefore, no Muslim should have anything to do with him.

According to **Mumbai Urdu News** (March 13), an emergency session of Majlis-e-Ulema Hind was convened at Najafi House, Mumbai. It was chaired by Maulana Syed Zaheer Abbas Rizvi and there it was stated that anyone who doubts any part of the Quran will automatically be banished from Islam. Such thinking is against the view of Sharia and Millat-e-Islamia. It was also decided in this meeting that every Muslim should socially boycott Wasim Rizvi and should not maintain any relation with him.

Comment: These 26 verses of the Quran have been disputed for quite some time. Because these include the killing and enslavement of polytheists, atheists and those who disobey Allah and justifies the looting of their property from the Islamic point of view. Earlier in this context, Chandmal Chopra of Kolkata and Indrasen of Delhi had filed a petition in the court regarding the removal of these disputed verses from the Quran. This dispute has been going on for a long time. Islamic scholars have said that this is the first version of Quran which Allah has sworn to protect. In the Quran, Shura al-Imran states that Allah certainly does not go against His promise. In this way the words of the Quran and its meanings are also safe. Its script is also safe, its format is also safe and its language is also safe. It is also safe for the great person on whom Allah has bestowed knowledge. Allah has made all

efforts and has adopted all practices for its protection. In this way, this holy book has been protected from every point of view. Even today, after the passing of 1429 years, by the grace of Allah, no changes have been made in the Quran. All the efforts made in this direction have been in vain and they are not going to succeed till the end. All the believers and ideologues of the Muslims have a firm belief that the Quran has never been changed and never will be

in the times ahead. It has been kept safe till date and will be safe till the end. Urdu newspapers have used strong words in criticising Wasim Rizvi and have claimed that the actions of Rizvi have been un-Islamic and are against the tenets of Islam. He has called madrasas as the breeding grounds for terrorism and has also tried to malign Hazrat Aisha, who is known as the 'Mother of Believers' for Muslims across the world.

Owaisi to expand his party in Gujarat



According to **Etemaad** (February 24), Asaduddin Owaisi's party All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM) has claimed that it will gain a foothold in Gujarat's politics by winning seven seats in the Ahmedabad municipal body elections. Addressing a press conference in Ahmedabad, Owaisi said that the Majlis would fill the political vacuum in Gujarat. He was accompanied by Sabir Kabliwala, the Majlis president of Gujarat. He said that his party would form a united front against the BJP in collaboration with the Bharatiya Tribal Party (BTP). He added that efforts were on to make the Patel community to join their fold. He claimed that the BJP and the Congress in Gujarat have fallen out of favour and the people of Gujarat want change. His party fielded 21 candidates in this election, out of which seven candidates have won.

According to **Mumbai Urdu News** (February 25), the politics of India is

becoming a tool for exploitation and spread of hatred with every passing day. Because of this, the boundaries of humanity and morality have also been forgotten in the politics of this country. Politics has become just a profession. Muslims are becoming easy targets in this valueless political system because they are weak and helpless. It is the Congress party which is responsible for making Muslims feeble and destitute. After the partition of the country, the Congress party played a devilish role in forcing those Muslims who remained in the country to stay weak and vulnerable. Today, due to social and political drama happening across the country, Muslims and Dalits are not safe. On the other hand, to make them politically, socially, economically and educationally backward, the present government and its officials are exerting their full might. The 'vicious Brahminical politics' practiced by the Congress propagated the politics of lies and greed in the country. The truth is that it is the Congress which brought the present-day politicians who are known for their greed and their ability to commit murders to power. The RSS, using its demonic power, has brought down the Muslims even below Dalits who are the most backward class of the country. Muslims considered Mulayam Singh, Lalu and Nitish as their saviours in various states of the country. But they forgot that it is a folly to expect sweet fruit from a thorny tree. Muslims always felt the

need for Muslim leadership in every state. This is the reason that whenever a Muslim politician made an entry into politics, the Muslims embraced him with open arms. But when the time came, they just gathered the votes of the Muslims and did not take any steps to provide security to the Muslims or better their living conditions. In the municipal elections in Gujarat, Muslims have once again announced their support to Owaisi. But will Owaisi live up to the expectations of Muslims? Right now, it would be wrong to say anything about it. This is a testing time for Owaisi.

MIM's mouthpiece, **Etemaad**, has said in its March 3 editorial that the Majlis has started a new journey with the Gujarat civic body elections. The Majlis started its political journey in 1957. The path was not easy. There were many obstacles that were created on its way. But none of the troubles could suppress the spirit of its leadership. The more vigorously it was suppressed, the faster it emerged out of it. The result of this is that today Majlis is not just limited to Hyderabad-Telangana but has spread its

activities to many states in the country. The Majlis is not a political party but has transformed into a thought and political ideology throughout the country. The eyes of the suppressed, especially minorities and Dalits across the country, are on this now. Therefore, it is necessary that minorities, Dalits and weaker sections gather under the flag of Majlis to get justice for themselves and to protect their rights.

Comment: The Majlis has spread its activities in many states of the country. These include Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Bihar. The attempt by the Majlis to form a united front with other Muslim parties in the elections of West Bengal has turned out to be a total failure.

Owaisi's bet on Abbas Ali Siddiqui, the head of the Furfura Dargah, has backfired. In what can be seen as a clear rebuttal, Abbas Siddiqui has joined the Congress-Left joint front. Apart from this, Owaisi is also trying to make a mark in Assam, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

Arshad Madani elected president of Jamiat for the seventh time

According to **Hamara Samaj** (March 10), Maulana Arshad Madani has been unanimously elected as the president of Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, the largest organisation of Indian Muslims for the seventh consecutive time. The decision was taken in the working committee meeting of the Jamiat. Along with this, the organisation also announced the start of a membership drive. According to the newspaper, Jamiat currently has 1 crore 15 lakh members, while it is expecting to see a drastic increase this year. The newspaper claimed that the Jamiat's work among the Muslims affected by the communal riots in Delhi has increased its popularity among



the Muslims of the country. This is the only such organisation which launched a massive campaign to save the Muslims caught in charges of terrorism from the clutches of law, which helped prove hundreds of people innocent in court. In order to spread education among Muslim students, the amount of students' scholarship has been increased from Rs 50 lakh to Rs one crore this year. Six hundred Muslim students have been selected across the country for these scholarships.

Addressing the working committee, Maulana Arshad Madani said that Muslims should strive hard to educate their children.

Because the Sachar Committee had said that Muslims are far behind Dalits in the field of education. He said that Muslims should maintain their close ties to Islam and the Quran. Maulana said that the present situation in the country has become very dangerous for the Muslims and Dalits. While there is a conspiracy to destroy the Constitution and the law, there is also a dangerous attempt being made to destroy the judiciary. Ever since the Modi government came to power, Jamiat has been campaigning for 'Sangh Mukh Bharat'.

What is Jamiat Ulama?

In politics, the Jamiat is often called the B team of the Congress. Because all its prominent leaders have been members of Parliament, both in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on Congress tickets. The Congress has been using this organisation to garner Muslim votes.

Background

The leaders of the Jamiat-i-Ulama, however, have been claiming that they have contributed significantly to the country's freedom struggle. But the fact is that this organisation has been a branch of Wahhabi extremist Islamic ideology since

its inception. Therefore, its goal was to establish Islamic rule in India by overthrowing the British rule. In the seventeenth century, when the Hindu rule was established in this country, Abdul-Haqq Dehlavi, a leading scholar of the Wahhabi ideology, wrote to Ahmad Shah Abdali of Afghanistan inviting him to upend the Maratha Empire by attacking India and to restore Islamic rule in the country. Jamiat was founded by Maulana Mahmud Hasan at the Khilafat Conference held in Delhi in 1919 and Mufti Kifayatullah was nominated as its first president. An interesting fact is that despite 100 years, this organisation still remains the family fiefdom of Mahmud Hasan. The Sunni-Islamic religious education spanning across the country is in the hands of this organisation. The family has also been controlling the Darul Uloom Deoband, the largest Islamic religious institution in the world for close to 200 years. Because the imams trained by this institution control millions of madrasas across the country, it is said that the leaders of the Jamiat-i-Ulama can gather the votes of the Muslims with the help of these Imams for whichever party they want.

Budget of Rs 562 crore approved for minority welfare in Bihar

According to **Qaumi Tanzeem** (March 2), Bihar Legislative Assembly has approved a Budget of Rs 562 crores for Minority Welfare Department as per the Minister Mohammad Jama Khan. The minister claimed that the Nitish government wants to do justice to all sections of the public and wants to lead them on the path of development. For this, it is necessary that in the Budget proper funds be allocated for the upliftment of the minorities and especially the Muslims. In 2004-05, the amount allocated in the Budget for the Minority Welfare Department was only Rs 3 crore 45 lakh which increased to Rs 253 crore in 2019-20 under Nitish government. Now it has been more than doubled. He

said that Muslims are backward in education. Nitish Kumar has constructed 45 residential schools to teach minority boys and girls, where more than 4500 students are residing. Construction of seven new hostels is going on. The administration is also looking for land for construction of these hostels in all the other districts too. With the goal of putting in place online reporting for better administration of hostels, Hostel Management Information System has been put in place. In addition to Haj Bhavan which was set up in collaboration with Maulana Mazhrul Haque Arabic and Persian University, special centres have been set up for the preparation of competitive examinations in six districts

- Patna, Bhagalpur, Darbhanga, Kishanganj, Ara and West Champaran. Minority students have benefited immensely from this. 245 students trained from these coaching centres participated in the Bihar Civil Services examination, out of which 119 were successful. Similarly 145 students appeared in the Bihar Civil Services final examination. Similarly, 285 minority students were coached for jobs like police constables and drivers, out of which 190 were successful. In 2019-20, 780 minority students were trained for other competitive examinations, out of which 310 were selected.



According to **Qaumi Tanzeem** (March 5), there was a meeting between Bihar State Sunni Waqf Board Chairman Mohammed Irshad Ullah and State Minister Rehman Khan regarding the setting up of a series of minority residential schools and multipurpose buildings in each district of the state by the Bihar State Sunni Waqf Board. In this meeting, it was decided to increase the pace of work and a roadmap for starting and completing these

projects was prepared. He said that it has been decided by the Waqf Board to pay salaries to the Imams and Muazzins each month. Under this, Rs 15,000 will be paid to Imams and Rs 10,000 to Muazzins.

According to **Qaumi Tanzeem** (March 7), the state government has decided to pay this money immediately. All formalities in this regard are being completed at the earliest. Bihar is one of the few states in the country to give such a huge amount of money as honorarium to the Imams and Muazzins. As of now, salaries are being given to Imams and Muazzins in six states. These include Telangana, Delhi, Haryana, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.

Conflict in Congress over alliance with Abbas Siddiqui in West Bengal

According to **Hindustan Express** (March 3), a new controversy has erupted since the Congress has tied up with the Left Front and the Indian Secular Front (ISF). Congress leader



Anand Sharma, in a tweet, criticised the Congress party decision to align with Abbas Siddiqui, the head of the Furfura Sharif Dargah in Bengal, and called it against Gandhi-Nehru's traditions of socialism, and claimed that it will weaken Congress's fight against communalism. He

said that one cannot be selective in politics. Whereas, Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said that Congress is an inseparable part of this alliance in Bengal, because it will help defeat the communal and divisive politics of the BJP. The

Congress has taken its share of seats and the Left Front has given seats to the Abbas Siddiqui-led party from its quota.

According to **Inquilab** (March 4), Siddiqui's attitude has softened in view of Adhir Ranjan's tough stance. Earlier he wanted 25 seats from the Congress

account, but now he has given up that demand. The Left Front has left 30 seats for Siddiqui's party, Indian Secular Front. Recently, Siddiqui and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury got into a heated debate at the public meeting held at the parade ground. Abbas Siddiqui of the Indian Secular Front had said that he had come to be part of the Left Front and Congress alliance and not to please anyone. At the same time, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury had said that according to Siddiqui, the Congress can not win the race. Siddiqui urged everyone to work for the welfare of the poor people and said that a change is necessary. He said that everyone will have to work together to usher in this change. He revealed that his party had asked for 40 seats from the Left Front, but only 30 seats were left for them. It is a very big party. He said that they were in talks with the Congress and he expressed hope that the dispute will be resolved soon.

Hamara Samaj (March 3) stated that initially, Asaduddin Owaisi of Majlis had attempted to join hands with Abbas Siddiqui to form a Muslim front. But this could not be successful. Because some sections had alleged that this front would lead to the division of Muslim votes which will give BJP a chance to come to power. The analysis also claimed that Majlis chief Asaduddin Owaisi met Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui of Furfura Sharif Dargah. He wanted his party, the Majlis to enter electoral politics in Bengal with pomp. He therefore chose Furfura Sharif as this dargah has a huge influence among the Muslims of Bengal. But when Taha Siddiqui, the real head of the Dargah Sharif, refused to ally with him, Owaisi tried to strike a friendship with his nephew Abbas Siddiqui. But Siddiqui did not fall into this trap and instead decided to enter politics on his own and later succeeded in forming alliances with the Left Front and the Congress. It is said that this dargah has a lot of influence among the Muslims of West Bengal, but will the Muslims accept this dargah being used to enter politics? Especially, when the real head of this

dargah has refused to fall into the trap of politics.

If the controversy between Anand Sharma and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury is viewed with respect to this background, then it seems that the fight has been going on without any reason. If we see the criticism of Anand Sharma, then it is clear that he has been overshadowed by soft Hindutva. Ever since the NDA government came to power at the Centre, the agenda of the Congress party is decided by the BJP and Congress merely prepares its policy on it. Anand Sharma has been with these soft Hindutva supporters of the Congress. Therefore, presence of a Muslim Party is not liked by them. The question is that if Pirzada Siddiqui has made a mistake by entering politics, did Sharma get irritated with him because he is a Muslim? Sharma seems to get irritated with the very mention of Muslims. Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury is trying to rectify the mistake that this alliance has made. In fact, the Congress made a mistake in estimating the election mood. By evoking the name of Furfura Sharif, it gave a lot of importance to the Indian Secular Front but the Congress did not know that leaders like Anand Sharma would get agitated by the very mention of Muslims. The world knows what the Congress party is made of. In 2014, after it suffered defeat at the hands of BJP, the Congress party has long dropped its mask of secularism. This is the reason that Anand Sharma gets disturbed whenever the names of Muslims are mentioned. But now, the days of some people involved in G-23 are over. Because under the guise of secularism, they can no longer peddle soft Hindutva.

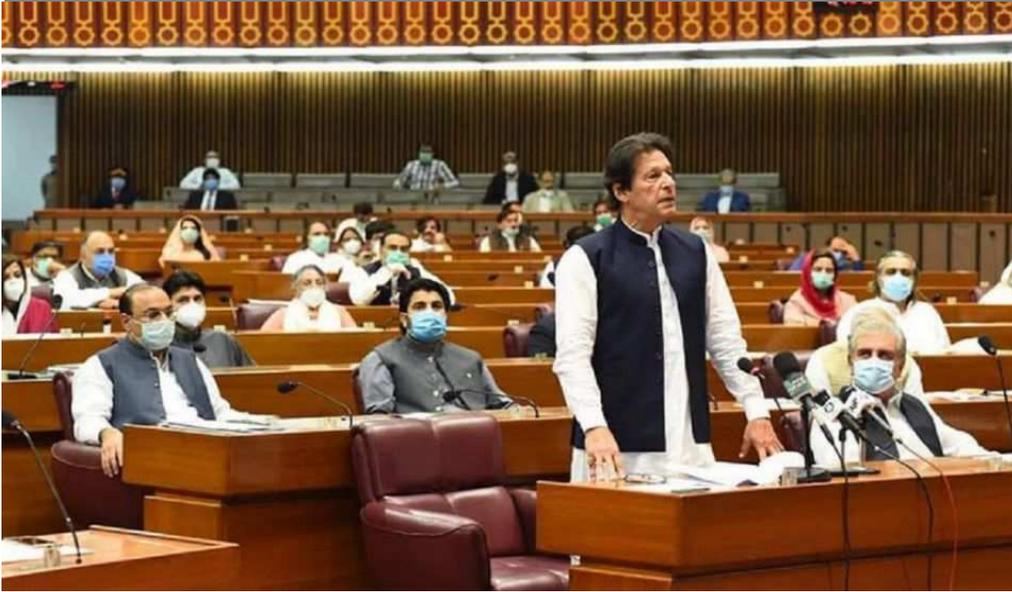
Avadhnama (March 2) has claimed that Owaisi had been trying to ensnare the Furfura Sharif shrine's clerics in his web for quite a while. The clerics were in two boats. On the one hand, both the clerics had gone to Hyderabad to meet Owaisi and invited him to visit the dargah. Owaisi came and after his visit to the dargah announced that he would accept whatever decision Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui would

make. He also said that he will start his work in West Bengal. It is said that when the Marxist party refused to have any kind of relationship with Owaisi, Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui was forced to make a front of his own. Siddiqui moved to the Muzaffarpur building (Marxist Party headquarters) and the Marxist party agreed to hand over all the seats in the Muslim-majority area of Nandigram to the Indian Secular Front, the new political party founded by Siddiqui. He announced in the joint election meeting of the Marxist Party and the Congress that wherever the Marxist Party is going to contest, they will give their blood to ensure the victory of its candidates and will see to it that the BJP and its B team Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress (TMC) are completely defeated. The strange thing is that although Pirzada has described the Trinamool Congress as the B team of the BJP, the reality is that the real contest in West Bengal is between the BJP and the Trinamool Congress. Modi and Mamata are standing face to face. If the Marxist and Congress alliance get thirty to forty seats, then they should be thankful. It seems like Pirzada has made an entry into the politics of lies. The foundation of his party rests on lies. First, he used Owaisi to get fame and then he turned his back on him. It seems like the new name of Pirzada's party may have been decided by the Marxist party. Because his party's name is Indian Secular Front. The president of this party is his younger brother Naushad Siddiqui. In our view, Pirzada may not even know the meaning of secularism. The supporters of BJP and RSS are advocates of creating a Hindu nation in India. That is why they do not even like the mention of the word secularism, although they may take the name of secularism, socialism and democracy which are the foundation of the Indian Constitution. With such an attitude,

they also participate in elections. The politics of today is a mixture of falsehood and betrayal. A party that ruled West Bengal continuously for 34 years never even gave representation to Muslims in politics and government. In the Sachar Committee report, it was said about the Muslims of West Bengal that the condition of Muslims there is the worst in the country. But in spite of this, we must also understand that the Communists are totally against the BJP as compared to all other parties and the BJP is also against the communists the most after the Muslims. The second Sarsanghchak of RSS, M.S. Golwalkar has written in his book 'Bunch of Thoughts', that Muslims, Communists and Christians are the three great enemies of Hindustan and Hindus. The Sangh Parivar is also firm on the opinion of its mentor. As far as Pramod Dasgupta, former general secretary and thinker of the Marxist party is concerned, he used to say that until the influence of the Prophet in West Bengal is not over, Communism cannot progress in the state.

In an article published in **Qaumi Tanzeem** (March 3), author Ghulam Gaus, while analysing upcoming elections in some states has appealed to Muslims to unite and vote in favour of Muslim candidates or their supporters who can raise the demands of Muslims in the legislative assemblies in a proper manner. The drawback of Muslims is that they have never formulated any strategy for any elections till date. Therefore, their votes kept getting divided and their representation in Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies has decreased rapidly. They never took an interest in voting and never have the voting percentage of Muslims crossed 40 per cent in any elections. The need of the hour is to change this trend and for the Muslims to vote in unison.

Imran government wins trust vote in National Assembly



According to Avadhnama (7 March), Prime Minister Imran Khan won the trust vote at the special session of the National Assembly after defeat in the Upper House of Parliament. 178 MPs voted in his favour. While Imran Khan needed only 172 votes to win the vote of confidence. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi moved the motion for trust vote in the House. The resolution said that the House expresses confidence in Imran Khan, the Prime Minister of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. After the motion was moved by the Foreign Minister, the President of the National Assembly, Asad Kaiser, informed the members of the House about the voting process. After this, the gates of the House were closed and the members were directed to go to the lobby to cast their votes. After the counting of the votes, the Speaker of the National Assembly announced that earlier in August 2018 when Imran Khan had moved the motion for vote of confidence, he had secured 172 votes, whereas today he has got 178 votes. Subsequently, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui,

Member of the National Assembly and Convenor of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) Pakistan, congratulated the Prime Minister for winning the trust vote. A minister in the Imran Khan government, Sheikh Rashid claimed that no leader in the history of Pakistan has put in the kind of effort that Imran Khan has to get the country out of crisis. The Pakistan National Assembly also has 158 members of Tehreek-e-Insaaf, 7 of MQM, 5 of Pakistan Muslim League (Q), 3 of Grand Democratic Alliance, 1 of Awami Muslim League, 5 of BAP, 1 of JWP and two Independents, who are all part of the ruling coalition. While the number of MPs of the opposition is 160, of which 83 are of the Muslim League Nawaz, 55 of the Pakistan People's Party, 15 of the MMA, 1 of the AANP, 4 of the BNP (M) and two Independent MPs are also part of the opposition. Imran Khan had to once again seek a vote of confidence from the National Assembly because the ruling party had to face a crushing defeat in the election for the seat of Islamabad in the Upper House

elections. On the general seat of Islamabad in the Upper House, the ruling coalition fielded Hafiz Sheikh, who was defeated by the opposition's joint candidate Yusuf Raza Gilani. However, the ruling party had a majority in the lower house. The ruling party's candidate got 164 votes while the opposition's candidate Yusuf Raza Gilani received 169 votes. This simply means that five MPs of the ruling party resorted to cross voting and voted for the opposition party's candidate. It is also worth mentioning here that this is the first time that a Prime Minister has taken such a step after the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Earlier, according to the Pakistani Constitution, every Prime Minister was required to obtain a vote of confidence from the National Assembly within 30 days of his election. But after 2010, this condition has now been lifted. Under Section 7 of Article 91 of the Constitution, the President shall not exercise authority unless he is satisfied that the Prime Minister does not have majority in the National Assembly.

According to the **Hindustan Express** (March 5), Pakistan's ruling party Tehreek-e-Insaaf had decided that Prime Minister Imran Khan will seek a vote of confidence after he lost the election in the Upper House. The announcement was made by the ruling party leader and Union Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi. Shah Mehmood had claimed that members could not cast their votes properly due to disturbances at the time of voting. Some members of the National Assembly have admitted that they had sought a fresh ballot from the officials of the Election Commission, but their request was denied. Voting was held in 340 seats of the National Assembly, out of which seven votes were cancelled. On the direction of the Supreme Court, the Pakistan Election Commission had decided to uphold the secret ballot. Pakistan's Information Minister Shibli Faraz, commenting on Yusuf Raza Gilani's victory at a press conference indicated that the opposition

had bought the votes of some people of the ruling party. On Gilani's victory, People's Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto said in a tweet that democracy is the best revenge. Long live Bhutto! Muslim League Nawaz Vice President Maryam Nawaz had said in her tweet that the fake mandate has been taken back by the representatives of the people. Now Imran Khan has no basis to occupy the Prime Minister's chair.

If we look at the numbers, the ruling party and its allies had the support of 185 members. While the opposition had 160 members. Re-election was held in the Duska region following allegations of rigging of votes. Already 11 senators have been elected unopposed from Punjab. Whereas in Balochistan all parties have won seats in proportion to their members. Out of the 12 seats, the ruling front has got 8 and the opposition has got 4 seats. 65 members of the Subai Vidhan Sabha cast their votes for the 12 seats of the Balochistan to Senate. The ruling party got five out of the usual seven seats, while the opposition got only two seats. The two seats for technocrats were won by Kamran Murtaza of JUI and Saeed Ahmed Hashmi of Balochistan Awami Party. The seats reserved for women were won by Samina Ehsan of Pakistan National Party and Samina Mumtaz of Balochistan Awami Party. While Dinesh Kumar won the seat reserved for minorities. In the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf won 10 out of the 12 seats of the Senate. The general seats were won by Abdul Rahman of JUI (E) and Hidayatullah of Awami National Party. Sania Nishtar and Falak Naaz of Tehreek-e-Insaaf have won the seats reserved for women. While Gurdeep Singh of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf Party won the seat reserved for minorities.

Earlier, according to **Hindustan Express** (March 3), the Supreme Court of Pakistan had directed the Election Commission that Senate elections should be held by secret ballot. ■

Switzerland imposes ban on wearing of burqa in public

According to **Inquilab** (March 9), in a referendum in Switzerland, more than 50 percent of voters supported the ban on Muslim women wearing veils. According to the result of the referendum, more than 53 percent of the people have supported the ban on covering faces in public places, due to which no woman can now cover her face on public transport, shops, restaurants and roads. But this ban will not be enforced in religious places. It is known that before this, wearing of burqa and veils have been banned in many European countries like France, Belgium and The Netherlands. For the last several years, there was a discussion going on in Switzerland on whether to ban the wearing of burqa in the country. According to Swiss law, if a memorandum is signed by one lakh voters, it can be presented for a referendum in the country which has a population of 86 lakh. After the ban is enforced, no woman can hide her face completely in public places which also includes shops. However, there is no specific mention of burqa or veil in the government law. But it is clear that the ban has been imposed on the use of veils or burqa that are worn in accordance with the Islamic traditions. Currently this ban is already in force in two cantons of Switzerland.

The right-wing Swiss People's Party has strongly come out in support of the burqa ban. The posters it had used in its campaign show a woman wearing a veil and under it was written, "Stop Islamic Terrorism". The same poster also shows a woman who is unable to control her anger.



A spokesperson for this party said that fortunately there are not many women wearing burqas in Switzerland. But some people of the government are not in favour of banning the burqa. They have argued that if this ban is imposed then the number of tourists coming to Switzerland may see a decline. Because families of Arab Sheikhs come to visit Switzerland in large numbers and they have many accounts in Swiss banks. Anees Sheikh, spokeswoman for the Muslim women's organisation, termed the law useless and said it is based on racism and is anti-women. She claimed that the matter was being blown out of proportion. However, in Switzerland, the number of women wearing burqa is only 30. Opposing the referendum, the women's cell of Amnesty International (Switzerland) has stated that the ban is a symbol of discrimination and is a violation of women's rights. This ban will be a dangerous precedent which is against the country's policy of secularism and individual freedom.

Taliban attack feared in Afghanistan

According to **Inquilab** (March 9), United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken has warned Afghanistan that the Taliban could launch a massive attack if the Afghan

President Ashraf Ghani does not immediately consider new plans to further the peace process. The US Secretary of State has made it clear that the US is

considering withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan by the month of May. Apart from this, other options are also being considered. It is not yet clear what the new policy of USA will be in Afghanistan, because the US administration is considering several options.

Avadhnama (February 25) reported that according to United Nations sources, the number of civilians injured and killed in Afghanistan in 2020 has come down by 25 percent. But since the peace talks have started, there has been a huge increase in killings of civilians. In its latest report, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has called for a ceasefire from all sides in view of the increasing violence in Afghanistan. The United Nations' demand for an end to violence has come at a time when peace talks in Afghanistan have regained momentum after several weeks. The peace talks in Afghanistan started in September last year, but no specific progress has been made so far.

According to the report, 3,535 civilians have been killed and 5785 were injured in various incidents of violence in Afghanistan in 2020. Although this number is 15 percent lower than in 2019, there has been a huge increase in incidents of violence in the last quarter of 2020. The report has expressed concern that 43 per cent of those killed in the civil war include women and children. The international order continues to put pressure on Taliban to end the war but the Taliban is not yet ready for it. The report also said that the Taliban is responsible for 20 per cent of the civilian casualties this year.

According to **Sahafat** (March 1), the Taliban has ordered their cadre not to give shelter to any foreigners. Because the US has been constantly violating the ceasefire. The so-called military commander of the Taliban has instructed all cadres that neither should any foreigner be given any position in their organisation nor should they be given asylum. He has warned that if anyone violates this order, strict action will be taken against him and he will be thrown out of the organisation.

According to **Avadhnama** (March 4), the US Administration's Monitoring Organisation 'Special Inspector General of Afghan Reconstruction' has alleged in its report that billions of dollars that have US taxpayers' blood and sweat on it have been wasted on transportation and construction of buildings in Afghanistan. However, all these buildings are still lying vacant. This report has stated that since 2008, 7.85 billion US dollars have been spent on buildings and vehicles in Afghanistan. According to the report, out of this money, only 1.2 billion dollars have been spent on buildings and vehicles which were actually used. This is a humungous waste of government money.

According to **Mumbai Urdu News** (March 6), 16 militants belonging to Al Qaeda were killed and 30 Taliban militants were shot dead in connection with an operation by the Afghan forces in Kapisa, the north-eastern region of Afghanistan. Among them were Pakistani nationals who were involved in the terrorist group linked to Al Qaeda. A large number of foreign weapons were recovered from their possession.

According to **Sahafat** (March 4), three women working in radio and television studios in Afghanistan were gunned down by terrorists. These women worked at the radio cum TV Center in Jalalabad. Enikass TV director Zalmi Latifi said that these women were killed in two different attacks after leaving their office. The women were walking from the office to their respective houses when they were killed in a firing. All three women belonged to the dubbing department. Their names are said to be Shahnaz Roafi, Sadia Sadat, and Mursal Wahidi. These female employees used to dub popular TV programs made in India and Turkey in the languages of Dari and Pashto. So far, no terrorist organisation has accepted responsibility for the attack on them. But government sources claim that militants of the extremist Islamic organisation, Islamic State are behind this attack. Last year, three TV artists working in the same TV station

were gunned down on the instructions of the Islamic State. In the last two years, at

least 65 media personnel in Afghanistan have been shot dead by Islamic terrorists.

Biden reverses ban on green card

According to **Sahafat** (February 26), US President Joe Biden has abolished the green card ban that the Donald Trump government had implemented last year. According to legal experts, this ban also prevented those persons from residing in America who had migrated to the country according to the law. The new president started reconsidering the decision regarding migration as soon as he took office and since then he has changed many policies. Biden has said that the ban Trump had imposed did not benefit American interests. Rather it has had the opposite effect and had caused damages. American citizens and others who were legally entitled to permanent residence in the United States were also being harmed and were unable to meet each other. In addition, American industry that use available resources across the globe to expand their operations were

also being harmed. Former President Trump imposed the ban in April last year, stating that in order to overcome the rising unemployment caused due the corona virus pandemic, it was imperative to provide employment protection to the Americans. Under this ban, it was decided not to issue green cards to people living outside the US. This ban affected 1 lakh 20 thousand such families who were entitled to get visas on primary basis. In addition to this, people who were granted visas for jobs were also affected. However, in national interest, the employees of the Health Department were exempted from this restriction. Along with this, the visa lottery system was also banned, which provided American visas and permanent residence to many people. In December last year, Trump also announced that the ban will be extended till March.

Attack by Islamic terrorists in Somalia

According to **Sahafat** (March 7), several people were killed in a car bomb blast in the first week of March outside a restaurant in Mogadishu, Somalia's capital. According to the latest information, at least 21 people have been killed in this attack and more than thirty have been injured. The blast took place when people were having dinner and all the seats in the restaurant were fully occupied. Many buildings collapsed due to the explosion. The government spokesman said that the Islamic terrorist group Al Shabaab is behind this blast. Al Shabaab is said to be linked to Al Qaeda. This Islamic terror organisation has been active in Somalia for a long time and it has the blood of hundreds of innocent people on its hands. This terrorist organisation has waged jihad in this country for quite some

time. Its goal is to establish Islamic rule in Somalia. Al-Qaeda terrorists and government forces have been carrying out armed warfare in many places in the country, leading to almost a civil war like situation. A large area of southern and central part of Somalia is currently in the control of Al Shabab. A few days ago, Al Shabaab militants killed at least a dozen soldiers when they attacked a prison facility and rescued many of the dreaded terrorists who were in captivity. According to the spokesperson of Al Shabab, they freed 400 of their fighters from the prison. In Somalia, the opposition front had announced a fierce demonstration in the capital against the non-conduct of general elections. But after the blast, the opposition announced postponement of the protest.

Indications from Pope's Iraq visit



Muslim and Christian politics is taking a new turn. For centuries, there were conflicts between Muslims and Christians around the world. But now they are coming close to each other in view of the changing situation. Recently Pope Francis was on a three-day visit to Iraq.

According to **Roznama Sahara** (March 8), the Pope visited Mosul, the old stronghold of the Islamic State, during his tour. He organised a special prayer outside the ancient church, which was devastated and ruined by the Islamic State terrorists. On this occasion, the Pope prayed for those affected by the war. He requested Christians from Iraq and the Middle East not to leave their homes and cities. He insisted that Iraq's Muslims and Christian leaders should forget their past enmity and should work for peace and unity. He then went to a historical place called Ur which is traditionally believed to be the birthplace of Hazrat Ibrahim (Abraham), who is considered the patriarch Prophet by the Muslims, Christians and Jews. But no Jewish delegation was included in the Pope's prayer meet. Thousands of soldiers were deployed in Iraq to protect the 84-

year-old Pope. Because intelligence sources had indicated that there may be a fatal attack on the Pope during the tour.

According to **Sahafat** (7 March), the Pope met the supreme religious leader of the Muslims, Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Al-Husayni Al-Sistani in a closed-door meeting in Najaf. For the first time in the two thousand years history of the Catholic Church, the Pope has visited a person at his home. Ten thousand Iraqi soldiers were deployed to protect the Pope. The movement of citizens was completely banned. Sistani has been living in a simple house near Hazrat Ali's Roza in Najaf for several decades. The Pope arrived there with his bullet proof security. Christians have been migrating from Iraq since 2003. There were fourteen lakh Christians living till the end of Saddam Hussein's rule, whose number has now reduced to 2.5 lakhs.

According to **Etemaad** (March 7), the Pope and Iraq's Shia leader have in a message asked the Muslims to embrace the helpless and troubled Christians of Iraq. Ayatollah Sistani has said that religious authority has played a special role in the

protection of Iraqi Christians. They should live in peace and receive the same rights as other Iraqi officials. An official of the Pope said that the Pope had taken off his shoes before entering Sistani's house.

According to another news published in **Etemaad** (March 7), the Pope visited the city of Mosul which was devastated in the war and laid the foundation of a memorial for those who died in this war. The local church which was established in 2017 had suffered heavy damages in the war between the Islamic State and the Iraqi Army.

Etemaad welcomed the Pope's visit to Iraq in its March 6 editorial and stated that it has raised rays of hope. This will help end Islamophobia from the world. At the same time, the hatred that has arisen in Western countries against Muslims in the name of terrorism will also be erased. This visit of the Pope is of special significance to the Middle-East as well as to the global situation. Iraq's Foreign Minister Fawad Hussain has said that the Iraqi people have been waiting for it with bated breath, as it will help the mosques and churches have a sense of unity.

Inquilab editor Shakeel Shamsi, in his editorial (March 7), has fiercely criticised the Pope and Christianity, and said that the visit of Pope Francis was being presented in such a way as if it would bring peace across Iraq. Although there may or may not be any benefit from his visit, it should be welcomed. Criticising Christianity, Shamsi has asked whether all the people associated with the religion of the Pope keep wearing white robes like him and carry the white flag of peace in their hands or release white pigeons in the air? Is not his religion broken into two pieces? If one piece speaks of peace, then does not a river of blood flow under the feet of another piece? If one hand rises for the sake of bringing peace, then does not the other hand show nuclear weapons and threaten to ruin the world?

It is also a fact that at this time, extremism and terrorism have penetrated all the religions of the world in one way or the other. Pope Francis would definitely

know who had raised the Islamic State in Iraq. Which countries provided arms and money to the Islamic State to establish a new Khilafat? The Pope would also know that the Islamic State was brought into Iraq to create communal differences among Muslims and to divide them. But the Islamic State started targeting Muslims as well as Christians and Yazidis. When its jihadi fighters demolished the tombs, they also destroyed the historic churches of Iraq. On one hand, they made Muslim girls a victim of their lust in the name of Jihad al-Nikah, on the other hand Christian girls were also auctioned on the streets of Iraq. When the corpses started piling up in Mosul and Anbar, then those who created the Islamic State realised that snakes can be fed, but they cannot be told whom to bite and whom not to. The Pope also knows that before the US attacks on Iraq, there were 15 lakh Christians there, but now it has reduced to a mere five lakh. Because Christians thought it necessary to run away from the country to save their lives. Iraqi Christians are now returning to their homes. The work of renovation of churches have also started. In fact, the Pope should talk to those people who target and destroy Muslim countries for their political interests.

According to **Roznama Sahara** (March 8), Malaysia's Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin welcomed the Pope's visit and expressed hope that it would ease tensions in the world. US President Joe Biden said in a statement that the Pope's visit to Iraq is a new message of hope. This will mark a new turn in world politics.

Comment: This is not Pope Francis's first visit to a Muslim country. Earlier in 2019, the Pope visited many Arab countries first time in the 2000-year-old history of Christianity. In 2019, an agreement was signed by Pope Francis and Azam Sheikh Ahmed al-Taib, Grand Mufti of Jamia Al Azhar, the largest Sunni education institution in the Islamic world, which stated that the war between Muslims and Christians have lasted for hundreds of years. But no one has tried to put an end to

the bitterness that arose between the followers of these two religions. Now a new era of renaissance has been ushered in the Christian world which has led the western countries to come out of their

extremism and narrow outlook. The article said that this tour will start a new phase of goodwill and harmony between the two religions. ■

US softens stand on Saudi Prince's role in Khashoggi murder

According to **Hamara Samaj** (February 26), the secret investigation agency investigating the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi has accused Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of murder. The report claimed that Saudi Crown Prince had approved the killing of the journalist. US President Joe Biden told reporters that he had read the report and that he would speak to the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia in this regard. The new President of USA is reviewing the Middle East policy of his country and in this context, he is giving special importance to the human rights violations in Saudi Arabia.



It is known that Jamal Khashoggi was a great critic of the Saudi Crown Prince. He was last seen entering the Saudi embassy in Istanbul on October 2, 2018. After that, no clue of his whereabouts has been found till date. There was a huge uproar around the world regarding this matter. At first, the Saudi Crown Prince denied his involvement in Khashoggi's murder, but later the Saudi government admitted that action was being taken against anti-national elements of the country and Khashoggi was killed by mistake in this regard. After that, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman also said in a statement in July 2019 that he accepts the moral responsibility of Khashoggi's murder.

Five Saudi Arabian officers who were involved in the murder of the

journalist were first sentenced to death, but their punishment was later commuted to life imprisonment.

According to **Hindustan Express** (March 3), the Saudi government rejected the findings of the US investigative agency and claimed that the report

was biased. Pakistan has supported Saudi Arabia in this matter. Many political analysts in Pakistan believe that it should have remained impartial in this issue. But some other analysts in Pakistan have pointed out that Pakistan has supported the Saudi Crown Prince in this matter to remove the tensions that are currently seen in the Saudi Arabia-Pakistan relations.

According to **Hindustan Express** (March 8), during the 2020 presidential election campaign, Biden announced that if he came to power, he would take strict action against the killers of Khashoggi. But it seems that after taking into consideration American interests, there has come a huge gap between Biden's words and actions and now his stance has softened considerably. Many American leaders want the President to take harsh measures against Saudi Arabia in this matter. Former US Ambassador William Lawrence has said that the Biden administration has indicated its unhappiness with Mohammed bin Salman and it wants to take some concrete steps in this context. But it would be better for America's interest to ignore Mohammed bin Salman as an unwanted person. He added that it is against US interests to ruin

its relations with Saudi Arabia. Whenever the US tries to improve its relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia creates a hurdle. The investigation report about the murder of journalist Khashoggi that was leaked to newspapers by White House sources, may cause relations to be strained between the US and Saudi Arabia. But Saudi Arabia's effort is to avoid any tension in relations with the US as it has not mentioned

Yemen, Iran and other problems. In the talks that were recently held between the US President and the Saudi King, the US President has made it clear that the US will continue to protect Saudi Arabia as in the past. The strange thing is that in this conversation, the two leaders completely ignored the persecution of Arabs in Palestine. ■

Saudi Arabia takes action against corrupt officials



According to **Sahafat** (March 4), three high ranking officials in the Saudi royal family's security squad have been detained on charges of corruption. According to sources, the provisions of Prevention of Corruption Act have been evoked as these officials are alleged to have issued tenders worth USD 106 million to companies formed in their names as well as in the names of their relatives. Among those arrested from the Royal Guards include officials such as Major General, Colonel and Lieutenant Colonel. All these three officers belonged to the department relating to procurement and contracts for the palace. On the basis of their interrogation, 21 other prominent traders and people of Arab descent have also been arrested.

A spokesperson for Saudi Arabia's Control and Anti-Corruption Authority claimed that the arrested officials have admitted that the tenders they had issued in

the names of companies owned by them and their relatives were against the rules and that these companies had illegally received millions of riyals that were released from the state exchequer. Apart from this, these officials bought property worth billions of dollars in their name abroad. So

far, a scam of USD 106 million has come out against them. It is also likely that the amount in question will see an increase. In this connection, 21 other people have also been arrested and many others have been detained.

As per another lawsuit, one more high-ranking official associated with the royal palace who was working in the land grant department have also been arrested. It is alleged that he allotted land to citizens through bogus royal decree by taking millions of rials in bribes from them and with the help of brokers. Two brokers have also been arrested in this regard. The spokesperson said that the officials of Saudi Arabia who have received huge amounts of money by misusing their positions will not be spared at any cost. A vigorous campaign is being launched against such people across the country. ■

Biden extends sanctions on Iran



According to **Roznama Sahara** (March 7), Biden announced a one-year extension to the US National Emergency and sanctions declared against Iran in 1995. Under this law the United States imposes various restrictions on Iran for the manufacture of nuclear weapons and for supporting terrorist organisations. The US President's Office has reported that the National Emergency that was evoked in the context of Iran on 15 March 1995 under Section 202D of the National Emergency has been extended for one year till 15 March 2021. Biden has said that Iran's activities and its policies continue to be a permanent threat to America's national security, foreign policy as well as to its economy. He has accused Iran of developing nuclear weapons and supporting terrorist organisations.

According to **Inqilab** (March 6), Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif has announced that Iran does not accept the proposal passed by the US officials on the nuclear treaty and no new talks will be initiated on the deal. Javad Zarif was referring to the claim of US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, in which she said that in 2021, the situation in the entire region had changed. Therefore, talks should be initiated with Iran about the new terms of the nuclear treaty. It is 2021,

not 2015. On this, the Foreign Minister of Iran said that there is a lot of difference between the circumstances of the United Nations in 1945 and 2021.

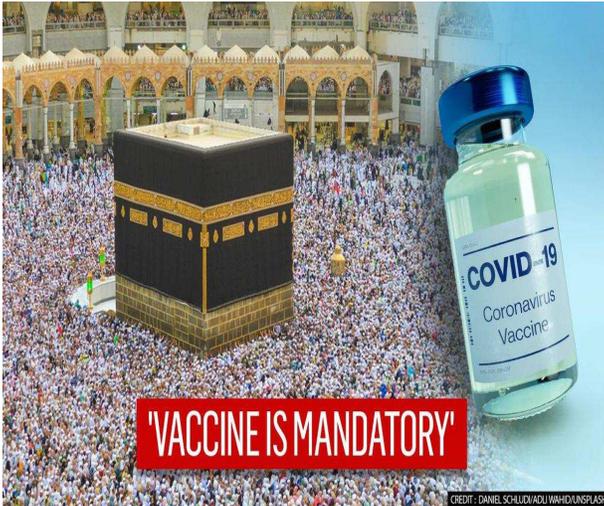
It is known that the nuclear deal was signed in 2015 by Iran and five other countries as well as Germany. But in January 2016, the US withdrew unilaterally from it. On the other hand, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi said that Iran has sought a number of clarifications before allowing observers of the United Nations to inspect their nuclear plants. Earlier Iran refused to answer any questions regarding the enrichment of uranium. Iran had enacted a law prohibiting its nuclear facilities from being allowed to be investigated by UN observers. After the passage of the law, Germany, France and Britain had condemned Iran's move. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said that they were looking at the explanation sought by the IAEA. He said that in 2015 while signing the nuclear deal with Iran, it was promised that if Iran halts the process of developing nuclear weapons, then the sanctions imposed on it can be relaxed. But later, American president Trump unilaterally withdrew from the agreement and imposed stringent sanctions on Iran. After this, Iran also

intensified its uranium energy program. But now, the new President's administration has created a ray of hope by announcing that all parties can reassemble with the goal of negotiating to save the deal. The Foreign Minister of Germany has expressed hope that if everyone makes an effort in this direction, a new agreement can be reached.

According to **Inquibab** (March 8), the President of Iran, Dr Hassan Rouhani, after meeting Ireland Foreign Minister Simon Coveney in Tehran, said that the United Nations Security Council should take action against the United States for

unilaterally withdrawing from the nuclear deal. He said that Iran is still implementing this nuclear treaty and has already suffered a lot of losses in this regard. He pointed out that Iran cannot go on suffering losses indefinitely. He added that the country will continue cooperating with IAEA like before. He said that Iran wants US to end its illegal and fake sanctions and withdraw the embargo imposed on Iran. Iran's foreign minister Javad Zarif has also insisted that the sanctions imposed by the US on Iran be withdrawn with immediate effect.

Vaccination mandatory for Haj pilgrims



According to **Inquibab** (4 March), the government of Saudi Arabia has announced that this year only those individuals who have taken both the doses of the Covid vaccine will be allowed for Haj. In this regard, the Saudi Health Ministry has issued a circular saying that it would be an important condition to grant Haj visa. According to the reports in the Arab papers, Saudi Health Minister Dr. Tawfig Al-Rabiah has also declared that the corona virus vaccine is mandatory for health workers attending the Haj of 2021. About one crore people are expected to participate in Haj this year. Haj was banned last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Later some

people were allowed to perform Umrah in limited numbers.

Saudi Arabia's official statement said that in 2021, strict arrangements would have to be made for Haj at Mecca, Medina and other holy places and points of entry into the country so that the pilgrims and people of Saudi Arabia will be protected from getting affected by the pandemic. A vaccination committee is being set up for Haj and Umrah, in which it will be mandatory for all the workers and employees who will be on duty during Haj to get vaccinated.

Spokesperson of the Ministry of Health, Dr Mohammed Al Abdul Ali told a press conference that those who get vaccinated will have to spend two or three weeks in quarantine after receiving the doses. After that, even if they come in contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19, they will not need to quarantine themselves. So far, 3,86,000 people have been affected by corona in Saudi Arabia, while 6505 people have died. The Saudi government is continuing its vaccination drive to protect its citizens and others from the virus. Till now 8,85,000 people have been vaccinated.

Non-Muslims in Malaysia allowed to use the word Allah

According to **Inquilab** (March 12), a Malaysian court has said in an order that now non-Muslims can also use the word Allah in Malaysia. The use of the word Allah by non-Muslims in this Muslim-majority country has been banned for a long time. The hard-line Muslim groups in Malaysia have condemned the court order and have demanded the government to challenge the decision in the Supreme Court.

It is known that the government of Malaysia banned the publication of three words of the Arabic language, including the word Allah, in the books of Christians 35 years ago. But the court termed this ban as unconstitutional. It has been recognised by the Malaysian government that if Christians or other religious groups use the word Allah in their books, then Muslims

may fall prey to confusion and convert to other religions. However, such a restriction does not exist in other Muslim countries. Christians in Malaysia have been opposing this ban. Their argument is that the Malai language which the Christian population of the country speaks is based on Arabic. The federal government of Malaysia revoked a petition filed on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church in 2014, for using the word Allah in a newsletter to be published in the Malai language. But the Court upheld this ban. Malaysia has a population of more than 20 million, among which 61 percent are Muslims, 20 percent Buddhists and ten percent Christians. Other Arabic words that the Malaysian government has banned for non-Muslims include 'Baitullah,' house of God, 'Solat,' prayer, and 'Kaabah,' holy house.

Ban on auction of Islamic antiquities

According to **Inquilab** (March 12), the auction of Islamic artifacts by the Museum for Islamic Art in Jerusalem has been stopped due to public uproar. The museum was expected to earn millions of dollars from this auction. Now these 278 artifacts will be sent back by Sotheby's, Britain's largest auction house, to the Museum for Islamic Art, Jerusalem. Experts claim that when this museum was established in

Jerusalem, the people who set it up had assured the public that these Islamic artifacts will be available to them. Now if they are auctioned, then private collectors will grab them. The museum was established in 1960 by Solomon Waris, a Jewish capitalist and artwork collector of Britain. The museum has 268 unique Islamic artifacts from the seventh to the 19th century.

India extends invitation to Saudi Crown Prince

According to **Sahafat** (March 12) Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a telephonic conversation with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and invited him to visit India once again. Modi also stressed that Saudi Arabia should increase

trade and foreign direct investment between the two countries. According to the Prime Minister's Office, the two leaders have agreed that the bilateral agreement that was signed between India and Saudi Arabia in 2019 and the developments that

have taken place in that direction should be reevaluated. Further, trade relations between both the countries should be

enhanced and also areas in which the relationship between the two countries can be strengthened should be explored.

Telangana Waqf Board's income increased by Rs 109 crores

As per **Etemaad** (February 24), Telangana Waqf Board has completed four years of its establishment. According to Waqf Board Chairman Mohammad Salim, in the last few years not only has there been a huge increase in the income of the board but also 115 plots have been freed from illegal occupation. Waqf fund received Rs 32 crore 8 lakh. And it also received Rs 70 crore 63 lakh from the properties in its possession. The government provided Rs 196 crores in the form of grant. In the last four years, the Board received Rs 33 crore 54 lakhs from the auction of revenue in big dargahs. It also received Rs 19 crore income from rent. While Rs 7 crore rupees were received from the Fatwa department. He said that a special task force has been created to remove illegal occupations on the Waqf property. 115 illegal registrations have been cancelled.



Important dargahs that have been freed from illegal occupation include Mir Mahmood, Masjid Alamgir (Begumpet), Asurakhana, Dargah (Attapur), Dargah Saif and the Waqf property of Nawaz Jung and Viceroy Hotel. Seven non-populated mosques have been repopulated. Rs 20 crore is being spent on the construction of the Anees ul Gurba complex.

An auditorium has been built at Jamia Nizamia at a cost of Rs 14 crores. Rs 8 lakh is being spent on the repair of Mecca Masjid and Rs 50 crores on the development of Dargah Hazrat Jahangir. Ten thousand Imams and Muazzins are being given a monthly allowance of Rs 5000 each. He said that special plans have been made to repair the mosque of Hyderabad's famous dargah Hazrat Yousufain.

Kidnapped schoolgirls released in Nigeria



According to **Roznama Sahara** (March 3), all 279 Muslim girls who were abducted from a residential school by Islamic militants in Nigeria have been released.

The government of Nigeria has not yet clarified which organisation was responsible for the kidnapping of these schoolgirls. The government spokesperson refused to shed light on how the release of these abducted girls took place. It is known that in the last few days a residential school in Jamapara, a princely state of Nigeria, was raided by an armed gang and hundreds of girl students were kidnapped. According to the United Nations, slavery is currently practiced in some areas in Nigeria. It is difficult to say, what were the objectives behind abduction of these schoolgirls.

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