

# REVIEW OF URDU PRESS

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## JPC Report on Waqf Bill Tabled in Parliament



- Preparations in Gujarat to implement UCC
- 25 people killed in blast in Afghanistan

- Controversy erupts over Trump's Gaza plan
- Ban on wearing *naqab* in Kyrgyzstan

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## Summary

The report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) constituted to deliberate on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill has been tabled in both the Houses of the Parliament amid a huge ruckus. The Opposition parties, while describing the report as fake, boycotted both the Houses. Their allegation was that the chairman of the JPC Jagadambika Pal has presented a one-sided report under the pressure of ruling party and the opinion of Opposition members or their dissenting note were not included. The Opposition also alleged that the chairman of the JPC has purposefully given importance to the statements of those who have nothing to do with Waqf properties. Whereas, the statements of those related to the Waqf properties have been totally ignored.

The Gujarat government has constituted a five-member committee under the chairmanship of former judge of the Supreme Court Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai to prepare the draft for a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the state. This committee will hand over its report to the state government within 45 days. It is to be noted that the UCC has been implemented in Uttarakhand recently. There will be one common law for marriage, divorce, alimony and inheritance for all the religions and communities in the state. However, the Adivasis have been kept out of the purview of this law. This apart, preparations are on in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Assam to implement the UCC. A section of Muslims is opposing the UCC. Their claim is that this effort of the government is an interference in their religion and the Shariah.

The Maharashtra government has announced to move a Bill in the Assembly to stop forced conversions and Love Jihad. In order to prepare a draft of this Bill, a seven-member committee has been constituted under the chairmanship of the Director General of Police of Maharashtra. Maharashtra will be the 10<sup>th</sup> state to form a law against illegal conversion and Love Jihad. So far, nine states have created laws against Love Jihad and illegal conversion.

The US President Donald Trump has triggered a fresh controversy by announcing a reconstruction plan in Gaza. Trump said, “we want to rebuild Gaza after taking the area in our control, but the Palestinians who got displaced due to the war will not be allowed to settle down there again. The US has been providing a huge amount as aid to Arab countries, hence I am hopeful that no Arab country will refuse to settle these displaced Palestinians in their country”. Israel has welcomed this plan of Trump. Meanwhile, Arab nations strongly opposed this decision of the US President. France, Germany and Britain also opposed this plan of Trump. Saudi Arabia has announced the decision to call a summit of four Arab countries to discuss this plan.

The 49<sup>th</sup> Imam of Ismaili Muslims, 88-year-old Prince Karim Aga Khan, passed away in Lisbon. Now his son, Prince Rahim Al-Hussaini Aga Khan has been appointed as his successor. Aga Khan is considered as a descendent of Prophet of Islam. It was the Ismaili Muslims who established the Fatimid Caliphate with its headquarters in Egypt. Several countries in the world had honoured Karim Aga Khan. In 2015, the Indian government had also honoured him with Padma Vibhushan. Karim Aga Khan was also counted among the wealthiest people in the world.

## JPC report on Waqf Bill tabled in Parliament



**Inqilab** (February 14) states that the report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on the Waqf Amendment Bill has been tabled in both the houses of the Parliament amid a huge uproar. Despite strong protest from the Opposition, BJP MP Medha Vishram Kulkarni moved the bill in the Rajya Sabha. Whereas in the Lok Sabha, JPC chairman Jagadambika Pal tabled the Bill. During this time the Opposition boycotted the house. The Opposition, while describing the JPC report as fake, refused to accept it. In Rajya Sabha, Opposition leader Mallikarjun Kharge, while opposing the report, said the report has totally ignored the opinion of those related to the Waqf and the proposals of the Opposition members were also not considered. Kharge said it was an undemocratic method. We will not accept this fake report under any circumstance. He demanded the chairman of the Rajya Sabha that the dissenting note of the Opposition members shall be distributed among the members of the House and the Bill should be returned to the JPC. He alleged that the ruling party is forcibly imposing this bill on the people. Kharge alleged that the committee has deliberately taken the opinion of such people who have nothing to do with the Waqf, whereas the opinion

of those related to the issue have been totally ignored.

Two Muslim MPs of Congress in Rajya Sabha, Syed Nasir Hussain and Imran Pratagarhi, also opposed this Bill. Imran Pratagarhi said first a drama was staged by constituting a JPC on the issue of Waqf Board and later the dissenting note of the Opposition members was not included in this report. He alleged that the aim of the BJP is to seize the Waqf properties across the country. Another Congress MP Tariq Anwar said the intentions of the government are not pure. In Lok Sabha, Congress deputy leader Gaurav Gogoi said we were given just one night to read this report comprising 655 pages, which was not enough. He alleged that the chairman of the JPC is working under pressure. Congress MP Pramod Tiwari said we are not happy over the manner in which the JPC report has been tabled in the Parliament. If required, we will also move a privilege motion in this connection.

As per another news published in this newspaper, Jamiat Ulema, at a meeting of its working committee, has announced that we will not accept this Bill under any circumstance and will fight against it across the country. Jamiat Ulema alleged that the ruling party wants to take over the Waqf

property. The 123 Waqf properties located in national capital Delhi have been described as controversial and they are kept outside the proposed Bill. Chairman of Jamiat Ulema Maulana Arshad Madani said if government wants to rule in a dictatorial manner then why are we trumpeting democracy? Madani has warned the secular parties in the NDA that if they support this Bill by overlooking the sentiments of Muslims, then they will have to pay a heavy price for the same.



As per another news, more than a dozen Muslim organisations in the country have announced at a joint press conference that they will not accept this Bill under any circumstance. They said that if any effort is made to pass this in the Parliament on the basis of majority, we will oppose it in the streets. They alleged that the ruling party is ignoring the sentiments of Muslims and imposing this report on them in a dictatorial manner. We will continue to oppose it by staying within the constitutional and legal framework. Those who addressed the press conference included the chairperson of All India Muslim Personal Law Board Maulana Khalid Saifullah Rahmani, chairman of Jamiat Ulema Maulana Arshad Madani and spokesperson of Muslim Personal Law Board Syed Qasim Rasool Illyas.

**Urdu Times** (November 14) states that the chief of All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen Asaduddin Owaisi said the Bill is unconstitutional and is against Article 14, 15 and 19 of the Constitution. Hence it should be withdrawn. We will not accept it under any circumstance. Aam Aadmi Party MP Sanjay Singh condemned this report. He said the BJP is moving ahead on the path of dictatorship. That is the reason why the dissenting note of Opposition is thrown into the dustbin. The intentions of the government are totally dangerous. Sanjay

Singh said today the government is seizing Waqf properties. Tomorrow it will seize gurdwaras, churches and temples. Trinamool Congress MP Saket Gokhale said this issue is not related to the religion, but related to the Constitution. The objections of Opposition MPs regarding this Bill have been rejected. Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Arvind Sawant said that our objections have not been included in the report. This is throttling of democracy and cannot be tolerated.

**Aurangabad Times** (February 17) states that leader of Hurriyat Conference Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said the government did not consult people associated with Waqf. This law will be a threat to the autonomy of Islam and Muslim religious institutions. He alleged that the government wants to seize our masjids, madrasas and imambaras. Minister for Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju claimed that many Muslim MPs are personally in support of this bill but they are compelled to do so due to pressure from their respective parties. He claimed that Chandrababu Naidu and Nitish Kumar, who are part of the NDA, are also in favour of this Bill. Rijiju said that only Congress is opposed to this Bill and their aim is to tarnish the image of BJP.

**Hindustan** (February 16) in its editorial alleged that the government is using every trick to grab the Waqf properties of Muslims. It is throttling the Opposition members using its strength in Parliament. The newspaper expressed the hope that Chandrababu Naidu and Nitish Kumar will exert pressure on the

government to withdraw this controversial Bill.

**Akhbar-e-Mashriq** (February 16) in its editorial said the government wants to crush the Shariah law and the religious rights of Muslims. The newspaper made an appeal that if the government passes the Waqf Bill, then the Muslim institutions should approach the Supreme Court against it.

**Siasat** (February 14) in its editorial alleged that the BJP wants to implement its agenda of Hindu Rashtra on Muslims. The government should have tried to stop the illegal encroachment of lakhs of acres of land, but its intentions are not honest. The government wants itself to usurp the Waqf properties.

**Urdu Times** (February 14) in its editorial said the manner in which the JPC report was presented in the Parliament had violated the laws and rules. When the Opposition members objected to it, Minister for Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju made it clear that nothing has been removed from the report. On this, Congress MP from Karnataka, Naseer Hussain, while describing the report as fake, said the report has recorded the statements of such people who have nothing to do with Waqf. Whereas, the opinion of those related to



Waqf are not even included in this report. Several Opposition MPs supported this allegation by him.

**Munsif** (February 4) has accused the government of deliberately making Muslims second class citizens and taking over their properties.

**Hindustan** (February 1) has alleged that this is an important step in the direction of the goal set by the government to create Hindu Rashtra. In this bill, membership of non-Muslims in Waqf Board and Central Waqf Council has been declared mandatory. However, the Waqf property can be donated only by those individual who has been a Muslim for at least five years.

**Akhbar-e-Mashriq** (February 2) states that PDP chairperson Mehbooba Mufti appealed to Nitish Kumar and Chandrababu Naidu to put pressure on Modi government to withdraw this Bill.

## Now, preparations in Gujarat also to implement Uniform Civil Code

**Urdu Times** (February 5) states that Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel has formed a five-member committee to prepare the draft for a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the state. The chairperson of this committee will be former judge of the Supreme Court, Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai. The committee will hand over its report to the state government within 45 days. Gujarat Home Minister Harsh Sanghavi said this decision has been taken with the consent of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. It is worth mentioning that the UCC has been implemented in Uttarakhand

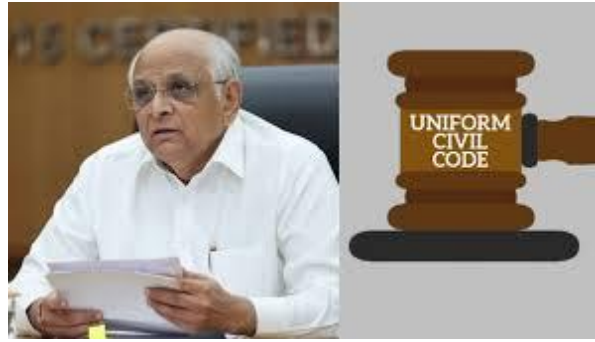
recently. However, the Adivasis have been kept out of the purview of this law. According to the newspaper, preparations are on in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Assam to implement the UCC. The leaders of BJP had indicated the implementation of UCC in Maharashtra as well but due to the opposition of ally NCP (Ajit Pawar group), it has been kept on abeyance for the time being.

**Munsif** (February 7) stated that the BJP is preparing to contest the next Lok Sabha elections on the issue of UCC. Its beginning was made in Uttarakhand because the number of Muslim population

is quite less there. By 2029, the BJP will keep this issue on the boil so that it could make UCC the main issue for the election campaign. The newspaper said the real aim of this law is to target the Muslims and to wean them away from Islam and Shariah.

**Hindustan Express** (February 11) said the UCC is against the freedom given to minorities in the Indian Constitution. The newspaper said the Congress government had come up with a Bill related to adoption in 1972. The then law minister H R Gokhale had described it as first step towards UCC. Following this announcement by him, there was unrest among the Muslims. The then head of Darul Uloom Deoband, Qari Mohammed Tayyib Qasmi, had called a meeting of Muslim thinkers in Darul Uloom Deoband. In this meeting, a decision was taken to constitute Muslim Personal Law Board to protect the Shariah and Islam. The newspaper said that if the UCC is implemented in the country, its direct meaning is that the Muslims will have keep themselves away from Shariah laws like *nikah*, *talaq*, *hiba* and inheritance. This is the reason why Muslims have been opposing UCC till today.

**Hindustan** (February 6) in its editorial has opposed the efforts being made to implement UCC in Gujarat and Maharashtra. The newspaper claimed that the people of RSS and BJP want to finish off the secular Constitution of the country.



Right from the beginning they have been inciting the majority community against Muslims by promising to construct Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, scrap the special status of Jammu-Kashmir and implement the UCC. However, in a multi-religious and multi-cultural country like India, it is not possible to implement a Uniform Civil Code. This is the reason why the Uttarakhand government has failed to implement the UCC among Adivasis. The newspaper asked why the religious freedom of Muslims is being curtailed?

**Etemaad** (February 5) in its editorial has opposed the efforts being made to implement the UCC in the country. The newspaper said that due to this policy of the government, the religious divide in the country will increase and the secular fabric will be damaged. Now the issue of Ram Mandir and Jammu-Kashmir is over for BJP, that is why it is raising a new issue of UCC. The government wants to send a message to Muslims that it will not rest until it has abolished Islam and Shariah.

## Maharashtra to make law against Love Jihad

**Urdu Times** (February 16) states that the Maharashtra government has announced to make a law against Love Jihad and to stop forced conversion. In order to prepare the draft for the same, a seven-member committee has been formed under the chairmanship of the Director General of Police of Maharashtra, Sanjay Varma. In this way, Maharashtra will become the 10<sup>th</sup> state to form the law against Love Jihad. Till now, nine states in the country—Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh,

Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh—have formed law against Love Jihad. Some time ago, BJP leader Nitesh Rane had demanded to bring a law against Love Jihad in Maharashtra. The then Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis had promised that the government would create a law against it. Recently, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said we will form a law against Love Jihad after thinking about all the aspects. He said that

we will try to see that the Opposition also agree to it. Fadnavis promised that this law will not be against any particular religion.

**Munsif** (February 16) states that while welcoming this committee, Maharashtra Minister Mangal Prabhat Lodha said this was a demand of the entire Hindu society. Incidents of Love Jihad are increasing rapidly in Maharashtra and it is very much necessary to stop them. Last year, four widely-discussed Love Jihad incidents came to light in Mumbai alone. Till then people of a particular community used to convert Hindu girls after luring them. He alleged that when I raised this issue in the Assembly, Samajwadi Party MLA Rais Sheikh had threatened to file a case against me in the court. Lodha said people like Rais Sheikh are deliberately promoting Love Jihad.

**Hindustan** (February 17) in its editorial claimed that the ruling party in the state is running a well-planned campaign against Muslims. An atmosphere of hatred is being created against Muslims in the name of Love Jihad. This is being done only because they want to cover up the failures of the BJP government. The newspaper claimed that the BJP is keeping its allies on the sidelines and fanning communal hatred in Maharashtra. The direct target of Love Jihad law is Muslims. The government wants to ruin and financially destroy Muslims. In Pune, 5,000 shops of Muslims were razed under the



guise of illegal construction. They claimed they were doing business there for the past 40-50 years. If they had done encroachment, then why no action has been taken against them till now? Chairman of Maharashtra Minorities Commission Pyare Zia Khan has demanded the scrapping of minority status of Urdu schools. Whereas another minister Nitesh Rane has demanded that an investigation be conducted into the Islamic madrasas in the state.

**Akhbar-e-Mashriq** (February 17) states that Devendra Fadnavis, while talking to correspondents, said there is nothing wrong with inter-religious marriages, but there is an increase in incidents of conversion by deception or by luring people with the promise of marriage and it is very much necessary to stop such incidents. Congress leader Hussain Dalwai said the ruling party is running a campaign of hatred on the pretext of Love Jihad so that an atmosphere could be created against Muslims by defaming them. Due to this, there is an increase in incidents of mob lynching. Dalwai said Sangh Parivar want to offend Muslims.

## Urdu media's reaction on Delhi Assembly election results

**Akhbar-e-Mashriq** (February 17) said the victory of BJP in the Delhi Assembly elections is a result of the foolishness of secular parties. The secular parties have failed to respond to BJP's aggressive election campaign. The secular votes got divided as the Congress and Aam Aadmi Party failed to enter into an electoral pact.

Due to this, the BJP came to power. However, in Delhi the BJP's success was not based on its achievements, but due to the mutual tug of war between the secular parties. Had there been an agreement between Aam Aadmi Party and the Congress, the BJP would never have come to power. Muslims have been supporting





Aam Aadmi Party right from the beginning. This is the reason why the Aam Aadmi Party candidates won in nine Muslim majority areas.

**Urdu Times** (February 16) states that the Aam Aadmi Party came to power due to Muslim votes, though it totally ignored Muslims during its 10-year-rule. The schools were directed not to allow Bangladeshi and Rohingya children to enter. The fact is that the Aam Aadmi Party government did not muster courage to condemn the use of bulldozers in Muslim majority areas in Delhi. The ministers of Aam Aadmi Party had accused the Tablighi Jamaat during the Corona pandemic that their people were spreading corona in Delhi and other parts of the country. This statement by them was totally wrong. In the recent election campaign, AAP has even left BJP behind in wooing Hindu voters. A Sanatan Seva Samiti was constituted. An announcement was made to provide wages to the granthis in gurdwaras and pujaris in temples. This apart, Sundar Kand was recited. All these were done to attract Hindu voters towards the party. The Aam Aadmi Party did not benefit from this Hindutva campaign, instead the power slipped out of its hands in Delhi.

**Avadhnama** (February 1) said the main reason for the defeat of Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi is that Arvind Kejriwal surpassed even BJP on the issue of

Hindutva. On the issue of bulldozer action in Delhi fort and in Jahangirpuri, the Aam Aadmi Party remained silent spectators. The leaders of Aam Aadmi Party had promised not to accept special facilities and government bungalows, but after coming to power those claims were thrown to the winds. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal spent more than Rs 100 crore on his government accommodation and converted it into a 'Sheeshmahal.' The party's image got a massive beating due to the liquor scam as well. The Aam Aadmi Party did not send any Muslim or Dalit to the Rajya Sabha. Kejriwal adopted the path of Hindutva instead of secularism. Hindu elderly persons were sent on 'Teerthayatra' for the darshan of temples. Huge wages were announced for pujaris and granthis, but the imams were not paid even one rupee for the past two years.

**Akhbar-e-Mashriq** (February 13) in its editorial has advised BJP that it should not make the mistake of thinking West Bengal as Delhi. Mamata Banerjee understands the pulse of the people of West Bengal and she has become the symbol of struggle for the Bengali people. On the one hand, Mamata Banerjee is committed to providing more and more facilities to the people. On the other hand, she is strongly taking on the communal elements.

**Urdu Times** (February 10) states that no matter how much you debate about

the Delhi Assembly elections, the truth is that communal poison is rapidly spreading among the citizens of the country. The BJP and RSS have set a goal to turn this nation into a Hindu Rashtra and they are rapidly moving in that direction. In view of the anti-BJP atmosphere in the country in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the party now wants to establish its power in all the states at all costs. All the Constitutional institutions in the country have become part of this campaign of BJP and the fourth pillar of the democracy namely the media has also become a puppet in the hands of BJP.

**Urdu Times** (February 9) in its editorial, while commenting about the results of the Delhi Assembly elections, said it was a major victory for BJP. The Aam Aadmi Party has been unilaterally winning in Delhi for the past 10 years. It had given the message that it would be very difficult to defeat Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi, but this time the party has been badly defeated. The biggest leader of the party and former chief minister of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal also failed to retain his seat. There has been 9% decrease in the votes of Aam Aadmi Party, which has been a huge decrease. However, in the Muslim majority areas, the Aam Aadmi Party got more votes. This time, along with Aam Aadmi Party, Congress and AIMIM were also in the field vying for Muslim seats, but the Muslim voters of Delhi kept faith on Aam Aadmi Party itself. Out of the nine Muslim majority constituencies, Aam Aadmi Party won in eight seats. Whereas the Congress failed for the third consecutive time to open its account in the Delhi Assembly elections, but despite this the Congress has managed to keep the Aam Aadmi Party away from power. Had the Congress and Aam Aadmi Party joined together and contested the elections, then it would not have been difficult for them to win 35 seats. The more than necessary confidence has sunk the Aam Aadmi Party.



Now this game will be played in Punjab as well. The newspaper has asked whether the 82-year-old national president of the Congress, who has started from zero and ended at zero, will take responsibility for this defeat?

**Munsif** (February 10), while analysing the Delhi Assembly elections, said the Aam Aadmi Party has lost due to its self-indulgence. This was not the magic of BJP, but the foolishness of Kejriwal. He had decided to fight the elections on his own strength. However, Arvind Kejriwal alleged that the stand of Election Commission in this elections is one-sided. They used every trick to ensure the victory of BJP. The newspaper alleged that Kejriwal's path of Hindu appeasement has proved disastrous for him. The BJP came to power in Delhi due to the differences between Congress and Aam Aadmi Party.

**Hindustan Express** (February 9) said that the Aam Aadmi Party had to face a huge defeat in this elections. However, the Muslims stood with the Aam Aadmi Party with an open heart. This is when the Aam Aadmi Party government had always ignored Muslims and did not leave any stone unturned in inflicting damages. Kejriwal has been cheating people right from the beginning till the end. He had vowed in the name of his children that he would not maintain any relationship with Congress, but he formed his first government with the support of Congress itself. He had also propagated that he would not take any government accommodation and neither would use a red-beacon car, but he never kept these promises.



Aadmi Party did not stand with him, instead he was expelled from the party.

**Siasat** (February 10) in its editorial said that earlier the Muslims in Delhi always used to be with Congress, but after the 2013 elections, their inclination was towards the Aam Aadmi Party. Mustafabad is the only such Muslim majority seat from where the candidate of BJP

registered victory. The reason for it is that there were several Muslim candidates in the fray, and the BJP took advantage of it.

**Akhbar-e-Mashriq** (February 10) in its editorial said the BJP's lotus has bloomed in the Delhi Assembly elections, whereas Arvind Kejriwal's party's fortunes have been dashed again. Interestingly, the Congress party could not even open its account again. The most painful part is that Arvind Kejriwal lost his own seat. The surprising thing is that former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia also could not win his seat.

**Etemaad** (February 10) said that after 27 years, the BJP seized power in the country's national capital Delhi. Due to the stain of corruption on the leaders of Aam Aadmi Party, the public has distanced themselves from them. Initially, the Aam Aadmi Party tried to play 'soft Hindutva' card, but when they understood that the voters were more inclined to 'hard Hindutva,' the party, apart from announcing wages to granthis and pujaris, started the system of reciting Sunder Kand, but this did not benefit. The newspaper said that the credit for BJP's victory goes to the cadre of the RSS, who did the hard work. The activists of RSS went to the houses of majority community and ensured that the voters who support them make the maximum number of voting.

**Hindustan** (February 11) states that a former leader of Aam Aadmi Party Prashant Bhushan said that this defeat is the beginning of the end of Aam Aadmi Party. He predicted that now the Aam Aadmi Party will get divided and cease to exist.

**Siasat** (February 4) alleged that Kejriwal wanted to prove himself to be the pioneer of Hindutva, and hence he deliberately kept himself away from Muslims. Kejriwal did not address even a single election meeting in Muslim-majority areas. The Aam Aadmi Party fielded Muslim candidates in five out of 70 seats in Delhi, out of which four won. Finally, what is the reason for Kejriwal to keep himself away from Muslim areas?

**Etemaad** (February 9) has complained that in the recent Delhi Assembly elections, the Muslims have strongly voted for Aam Aadmi Party, but the Kejriwal government had totally ignored the Muslims. In 2020, during the anti-CAA protests, riots broke out in North-East Delhi. More than 50 people were killed in these riots. Majority of the dead were Muslims. After the riots, the police started indiscriminately arresting Muslims, but Kejriwal remained silent. In connection with the Delhi riots, a councillor of Aam Aadmi Party, Tahir Hussain, was also arrested. The Aam

## Union budget in the eyes of Urdu newspapers



**Siasat** (February 2) in its editorial has alleged that the Union government in its latest budget has almost ended the programmes meant for minority students. In the last year's budget also a massive cut had been made in the pre-metric scholarship and post-metric scholarships for minority students. On the other hand, the government has hiked the budget for OBC students. Last year, the amount for pre-metric scholarship scheme for minority students was Rs 326 crore, which has been reduced to Rs 90 crore. In the financial year 2023-24, this allocation was Rs 433 crore. This apart, a huge reduction has been made in the funds for post-metric scholarship for minority students. Last year, the allocation for post-metric scholarship scheme was Rs 1,145 crore, which has been reduced to Rs 343 crore.

The newspaper said the Union government has made it clear that it has neither any interest in the development of minorities, nor it wants to provide any money for their education. However, the government has increased the allocation for the scholarship being given to the students of other communities in the society. This has exposed the truth about the government which raises the slogan of 'sabka saath, sabka vikas.' This is a clear indication of the anti-minority policy of the BJP. It is a fact that the development of any country depends on the educational development of people. Nowhere in the world children are

discriminated on the basis of the religion, but in India, the situation is just the opposite. The newspaper has advised that the minorities in the country should understand this serious situation. They should prepare themselves to get their share in the wealth of the country. This will be possible only when the minorities become self-reliant in education, social

and economic sectors.

**Avadhnama** (February 14) in its editorial alleged that the Indian government is deliberately reducing the allocation of budget meant for minorities. The government has stopped several important projects meant for the welfare of minorities. This includes several important programmes including the Kaushal Vikas programme, Nayi Manzil, USTTAT, leadership development programme for minority women and 'Hamari Dharohar'. Similarly, a 93% reduction has been made in the prescribed amount for Islamic madrasas. In the financial year 2024-25, Rs 1,575 crore had been allocated for six projects meant for minority students, but only Rs 517 crore had been issued. The data of the amount spent has also been not provided.

This apart, the government has made a huge reduction in the allocation for Waqf Board Development programme. Under this programme, the records of Waqf properties are being computerised. Another programme is Nagarik Waqf Sampatti Vikas Yojana. Under this programme, people associated with Waqf Board are being provided with interest-free loans so that Waqf properties could be developed on industrial lines. Under this, commercial complexes, hospitals, cold storages and centres meant for social activities could be constructed on Waqf properties. Earlier,



Ladakh. The population of these districts is just 3 lakhs. The newspaper said that the government has not made any effort in the 2025-26 budget to strengthen the weakening economy of the country. Drums are beaten about giving tax relief to those having an annual income of up to Rs 12 lakh in the budget, whereas, loans worth billions of rupees have been waived off.

The government is hell bent on destroying farmers and those doing small businesses.

**Urdu Times** (February 2) in its editorial said that Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has been kind to Bihar in view of the forthcoming Assembly elections in Bihar. Several new projects have been announced for Bihar. A huge allocation has been made in the budget for this. Similarly, special attention has been made for Maharashtra in the budget. NCP chief Ajit Pawar has described this budget as historical for Maharashtra. However, currently the country has a debt of Rs 114 lakh crore. No step has been taken to reduce this foreign debt, instead it has been hiked by Rs 14 lakh crore.

**Munsif** (February 3) in its editorial has expressed concern over the deteriorating economy of the country. The newspaper said that due to this, foreign companies are avoiding from investing in the country. The government has hiked its aid for Maldives, whereas for Afghanistan, a reduction has been made in the stipulated amount. For Nepal, an amount of Rs 700 crore has been allocated. Last year also, the same amount had been allocated for Nepal.

separate amounts were allocated for these programmes, but in the financial year 2020-21, a huge reduction had been made in the allocation. In the budget for financial year 2024-25, just Rs 17 crore were being provided for these programmes, out of which only Rs 8 crore were issued. But only Rs 10 lakh have been spent. Now in this year, the budget for both these projects has been cut and limited it to Rs 13 crore. Similarly, the subsidy for loans for doing higher education abroad has been reduced to Rs 8 crore, whereas last year, this amount was Rs 15 crore. It is clear that the whole effort of Modi government is to deprive educational facilities to minorities.

**Urdu Times** (February 3) in its editorial has criticised that in this year's budget, a huge allocation has been made for five states. The compulsion of Modi government regarding Bihar and Andhra Pradesh is understandable, because the Modi government is dependent on the largesse of the ruling party of these two states. In the budget for 20 districts in Jammu and Kashmir, only a 2% hike has been made compared to last year, whereas, a 32% hike has been made in the budget for the two districts, Kargil and Leh, in

## 25 people killed in blast in Afghanistan



**Inqilab** (February 12) reports that at least 25 people were killed and 50 were injured in a blast that took place in a bank in Kunduz province in Afghanistan. The condition of majority of the injured is serious. Those killed included three senior commanders of Taliban as well. According to government sources, the number of dead may go up further. It is being suspected that the hands of Islamic terrorist organisation ISIS were behind the blast. The blast took place when a senior official of Afghan army arrived to withdraw the money to pay salary for his soldiers. It is being said that the majority of those killed were officers of Afghan army.

**Inqilab** (February 24) states that a suicide attacker tried to enter a ministry located in Afghanistan capital Kabul. When the soldiers stopped him from entering the ministry, he triggered a suicide blast. Three Afghan soldiers were killed on the spot while trying to stop the attacker. Taliban's supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada said the Western nations want to keep Afghanistan as their slave, hence terrorist incidents are taking place in Afghanistan at their behest. He said the possibility of the hands of a neighbouring country in these attacks cannot be ruled out. Akhundzada said we have our border dispute going on with this neighbouring country. Recently,

the air force of the neighbouring country had violated our air space and even bombed a few places in our country. Several people were killed in this bombing.

**Siasat** (February 1) states that Afghanistan's Deputy Foreign Minister Sher Mohammed Abbas Stanikzai said that countries across the world are putting pressure on us that we open the doors of education for the women and girls of our country, but some people are opposed to lifting this ban. They claim that this ban is in accordance with the Shariah. Stanikzai said Prophet Mohammed had also stressed on the education of women and there is no provision to keep women deprived of education in Islamic Shariah. A controversy has erupted in Afghanistan following this statement by him. It has gone to the extent that Taliban's supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada has ordered the arrest of Stanikzai. However, before the arrest, Stanikzai left Kabul for Dubai. In one of his speeches, Afghanistan's Deputy Home Minister Mohammad Nabi Omari also demanded that the doors of education should be opened for women.

**Chattan** (February 6) states that the Afghanistan Army raided the office of the only women's radio station 'Radio Begum' located in Kabul and arrested all its employees. Following this, the radio station

was sealed. Afghanistan's information ministry, while confirming the raid, said that all the computers and telephones in

this radio station have been seized. In future, no women's radio station will be given permission to operate in Afghanistan.

## Demise of Ismaili religious head Aga Khan

**Avadhnama** (February 6) states that the 49<sup>th</sup> imam of Ismaili Muslims, Prince Karim Aga Khan, passed away at the age of 88 years in Portuguese capital Lisbon.

**Siasat** (February 7) states that Prince Rahim Al-Hussaini Aga Khan will become the 50<sup>th</sup> imam of Ismaili Muslims. In his Will, Karim Aga Khan has appointed his son Rahim Al-Hussaini as his successor. Karim Aga Khan has three sons and one daughter. Rahim Al-Hussaini is the eldest son of Karim Aga Khan. The names of his two other sons are Ali Mohammad Aga Khan and Hussain Aga Khan. Also, his daughter's name is Zahra Aga Khan. Prince Karim Aga Khan became the imam of Ismaili Muslims at the age of 20 soon after the death of his grandfather Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah in 1957. The grandfather of Karim refused to nominate his son Prince Ali Khan as his successor because he had married Hollywood actor Rita Hayworth. Ali Khan was infamous throughout the world for his extravagance.

It is worth mentioning that the Aga Khan family has been considered as a direct descendent of the Prophet of Islam. Ismaili is a Shia Muslim sect. Hazrat Ali is considered as the first imam of Shias. He was the son-in-law of Hazrat Mohammad. It is being said that the population of Ismaili Muslims is more than 2 crore, who are spread across 33 countries. The Ismaili sect began with the succession of Ja'far Al-Sadiq. It is said that after the death of Shia leader Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq in the year 765, differences arose over the question of his succession. Both his sons Moosa Al-Kazim and Ismail claimed for the post of the imam. The Shia Muslims got divided over it. The followers of Ismail are called Ismailis. Later Ismaili Muslims established



the Fatimid Caliphate with its headquarters in Egypt. The 48<sup>th</sup> imam of Ismaili Muslims was Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan III. Muhammad Shah had established All India Muslim League in 1906 in Dhaka and he was appointed as the permanent chairman of Muslim League. Following this, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who himself was an Ismaili Shia Muslim, got frustrated and left for London. Muhammad Shah had a major role in bringing Jinnah back to India.

Several countries in the world had honoured Karim Aga Khan with the highest civilian award of the country. In 2015, the Indian government also honoured him with Padma Vibhushan. Karim had always stayed in Portugal and in Switzerland. Both the countries had given him the citizenship. Ismaili Shias across the world are committed to offering 12.5 percent of their income to Aga Khan. It is being said that Karim Aga Khan has left behind property worth more than 13 billion dollars. The central office of Aga Khan Development Network is in Switzerland, where more than 50,000 employees are working. This fund is used for the promotion and preservation of education, medicine and culture. In India also, several historical buildings have been renovated, the important ones include the Humayun's Tomb in Delhi.

## Pakistan and Turkiye sign on 24 agreements



**Siasat** (February 14) reports that Turkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has visited Pakistan. He stayed in Pakistan for two days. During this time, the two countries signed on 24 agreements. The two countries stressed on improving relations in military, social and cultural sectors. Turkey has also agreed to assist Pakistan in the fields of finance, mineral exploration and hydrocarbons. This apart, the Turkish presidency of defence industries and Pakistan's ministry of defence production also signed on an agreement. As per this agreement, Turkiye will cooperate with Pakistan in the manufacture of aircraft and drones. An agreement has been signed between Turkish Aerospace Industries and Pakistan Marine Research and Development Institute for technical exchange and mutual cooperation in the manufacture of weapons. The two countries also announced mutual cooperation in media, communication, health and pharmaceutical manufacturing.

**Etemaad** (February 14) states that Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif welcomed Turkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at Islamabad airport. Shehbaz Sharif said that due to this visit

of Turkiye's President, there would be improvement in the friendship and cooperation between the two countries. Sharif said Erdogan is an important leader of Islamic world. He has strengthened his country and found solutions to the problems of the people. He said that Turkiye had always been cooperating with Pakistan for the freedom of Kashmiri people. We are hopeful that this cooperation would remain in future as well. Sharif claimed that Erdogan is a strong votary for the freedom and right for self-determination of the people of 'Indian administered Kashmir' and he had announced this several times. He expressed hope that the two countries will stick to this policy in future as well. Pakistan Prime Minister said that the two countries will cooperate with each other to eliminate terrorism. On this occasion, Turkiye's President Erdogan said the relations between Pakistan and Turkiye were centuries-old. The people of Turkiye have been greatly influenced by Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Mohammed Iqbal. He said that Pakistan is our second home. After coming here, I realised that we are at our own home. The President of Turkiye also met the President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari.



## Huge mob attacks Sheikh Mujib's house in Dhaka

**Hindustan** (February 7) states that hundreds of protesters damaged the house of Bangladesh founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and set it on fire. This historical residence of Sheikh Mujib is situated in Dhanmondi region. In 1975, the Bangladeshi soldiers murdered Sheikh Mujib along with his family in this house. After coming to power, Sheikh Hasina had turned this house into a museum. Sheikh Hasina strongly condemned this incident while addressing the Awami League workers through an online meeting. She said that for the past six months, efforts have been made to wipe out the history of the freedom of Bangladesh.

Earlier, Sheikh Hasina had announced that she would address the student wing of her party Awami League via online. Following this announcement by her, students belonging to the current ruling dispensation in Bangladesh attacked the Bangabandhu Museum situated in



Dhanmondi and destroyed it using bulldozers. The protesters were demanding a ban on Awami League. They were also demanding that Sheikh Hasina should be brought to Bangladesh from India and a case be registered against her. Coordinator for the student protests, Hasanat Abdullah, told correspondents that we will rest only after wiping out Sheikh Mujib. The police were also present on the spot to stop the protesters, but they remained mute spectators. The police chief of Dhaka said the protesters were in huge number, hence they could not be controlled. Had police used force, there would have been lot of damage to life and property.

## Ban on wearing *naqab* in Kyrgyzstan

**Qaumi Tanzeem** (February 4) states that Kyrgyzstan, a Muslim-majority nation in Central Asia, has imposed a ban on women from wearing *naqab*. Those women who violate this ban will be imposed a fine of 20,000 Kyrgyz Som. According to Radio Free Europe, Kyrgyzstan's law ministry claimed that the ban has been imposed on *naqab* due to security reasons. Its aim is to identify people by seeing their face. Those opposed to this ban say that this government decision is against the freedom for women. The



women have the legal rights to wear the dress of their choice, but they have been

deprived of this right. We will oppose this government decision.

It is worth mentioning that Kyrgyzstan President Sadyr Japarov signed a decree amending a law on religious freedom on January 21, 2025. As per this law, a complete ban has been imposed on wearing the *naqab*. This law will not be applicable on the *naqab* being used while under medical treatment. In

2023, a Kyrgyz MP Sharapatkan Majitova had started a campaign across the country seeking a ban on *naqab*. He had also demanded that a ban should be imposed on growing of beard by men. It is worth mentioning that several Muslim nations in Middle-East have imposed a ban on wearing hijab and burqa in schools. In these countries there is a ban on men from growing beard as well.

## Ban on celebrating Valentine's Day in Malaysia



**Hindustan** (February 4) states that a complete ban has been imposed on celebrating Valentine's Day in Malaysia. Those who violate this ban will be arrested immediately. Earlier, young couples in Malaysia used to exchange red roses and many people used to propose each other and start a new chapter in their life. Now the radical maulanas in Malaysia described Valentine's Day as against Islamic traditions and Shariah. Due to their pressure, the Malaysian government had to

impose a legal ban on celebrating Valentine's Day. According to these Muslim organisations, celebrating Valentine's Day is against the traditions of Islam and Shariah. This spreads obscenity and shamelessness in society.

It is worth mentioning that in 2010, the Iran government had also imposed a ban on celebrating Valentine's Day. This ban is in force even now. The Iran government had said that celebrating

Valentine's Day is a symbol of Western culture and it will promote illicit relationship. If any unmarried couple is seen in public places on the occasion of Valentine's Day in Iran, the police will arrest them and send them to jail. In 2017, the Islamabad High Court had imposed a ban on celebrating Valentine's day in Pakistan. This apart, several Islamic nations including Saudi Arabia and Uzbekistan have imposed a ban on celebrating Valentine's day.

## Controversy erupts over Trump's Gaza plan



**Munsif** (February 13) reports that US President Donald Trump has reiterated his statement about evicting Palestinians from Gaza and rebuilding it under the US control. According to French news agency 'AFP,' the US President Donald Trump held discussions with Jordan's King Abdullah. The US President said there are places in Jordan and Egypt where the Palestinians of Gaza can live comfortably. Later Abdullah said he opposed the expulsion of Palestinians from West Bank and Gaza and said the entire Arab world is against this decision. We want the reconstruction of Gaza without expelling Palestinians from their homes.

It is worth mentioning that Trump had threatened that if Jordan is not ready to settle the Palestinians of Gaza in their country, then the US aid to them will be stopped. A spokesperson of North Korean government opposed the plan of the US President to seize Gaza and settle its residents elsewhere. General Secretary of United Nations Antonio Guterres said that forcibly occupying foreign territory and annexing it to your country or to forcefully expel the population from there are unconstitutional and illegal.

**Hindustan** (February 14) states that Saudi Arabia's Ambassador in Britain Khalid bin Bandar Al-Saud said our government is of clear opinion that Gaza

should be rebuilt, but will not accept any plan to settle the Palestinians of Gaza in some other place. Talking to BBC, he said the world knows that the land of Palestine belongs to Palestinians. It is their territory. They have the full right to stay there. It is worth mentioning that US President Donald Trump had said in a press conference along with Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the US wants to bring Gaza in its control and make it the 'Riviera of Middle-East' (beautiful holiday destination). For this, it is necessary that the Palestinians are relocated to some other place.

As per another news published in this newspaper, a spokesperson of Egypt President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi said that we want to rebuild Gaza without displacing Palestine civilians from their homes. He said our clear belief is that an independent Palestinian state shall be formed based on June 4, 1967 border line. Without this, it will not be possible to have permanent peace there. The spokesperson said that Egypt President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has clarified that he will not settle any Palestine from Gaza in his country.

**Hindustan Express** (February 14) reports that Trump said we want to rebuild Gaza after taking it in our control, but those Palestinians displaced due to war will not be allowed to settle there again. In an



interview to 'Fox News', Trump said those Palestinian citizens living outside Gaza will be settled in other countries. He said the US gives a huge amount to different Arab nations as aid, and hence I am hopeful that no Arab country will refuse to settle these Palestinians in their country. Trump said that currently more than 20 lakh Gaza residents are living abroad. These people could be settled in those countries itself. He said that I will be called the owner of Gaza and will try to develop my property. This will become a beautiful piece of land. Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has appreciated this plan of Trump. Describing this offer of Trump as a revolutionary step, he said President Trump has come up with a distinct and better vision for Israel. This will result in the development of Gaza. German Chancellor Olaf Scholtz, while describing this plan of Trump as a 'scandal', said forceful expulsion of Palestinians from their homes is not acceptable and this is against international law.

**Etemaad** (February 9) states that Iraq President Abdul Latif Rashid said that as per the resolution adopted by the United Nations, it is very much necessary to establish an independent Palestine state for permanent peace in this region. He said we will oppose any plan for US occupation of Palestinian territory or forceful eviction of the residents from their homes.

**Etemaad** (February 8) reports that the British government, while opposing the Gaza plan of US President Trump, said

Britain is against forcefully evicting Palestinians from their homes. It would be better that if these people are settled in their homes once again. President of Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas has also opposed the plan of Trump. He said that no Arab country would accept this. Gaza belongs to Palestinians and they have all the right to stay there. Organisations fighting for the freedom of Palestine also condemned the plan of Trump.

These organisations said this statement of the US President is a declaration of war against the people of Palestinian people.

Palestinian Ambassador to United Nations Riyad Mansour described the statement of US President as absurd and madness. He said these kinds of plans will once again spread fire in this region. Hamas said it will not accept any such type of plans. This will spread anarchy in the region and will ignite flames of war. Our demand is that the Israeli offensive should be stopped and we should be returned our land. Other than this, we will not accept any plan. Turkiye's foreign affairs minister Hakan Fidan said neither Turkiye nor any Arab nation will accept this plan. This plan is madness and meaningless. This will create a fresh dispute. He said that Trump should take action against Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Palestinians should be returned their land.

**Avadhnama** (February 5) reports that Iran's foreign minister Abbas Araghchi said we are prepared to face any kind of US pressure. The demand to evict Palestinians from their homes would spark a war in the region.

**Aurangabad Times** (February 11) states that the spokesperson of Hamas Izzat Al-Rishek said the plan to evict Palestinian people from their homes will be abolished. Gaza is not any such property which can be purchased or sold off. It is the land of Palestinians. Turkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has raised objections to the

plan to evict Palestinians from their homes in Gaza. He said no power in the world has any right to evict Palestinians from their motherland. They have been staying there for thousands of years. Erdogan said that Gaza, West Bank and Jerusalem belongs to Palestinians and will remain with them.



#### **Akhbar-e-Mashriq**

(February 10) in its editorial has condemned the Gaza plan of Trump. The newspaper said that as soon as Donald Trump took over as the US President, he has created a turmoil across the world. He declared Canada as part of the US and expressed the intention to purchase Greenland. Now Trump has announced the plan to evict Palestinians from Gaza. It is being said that in the US Presidential elections, the hands of Jewish lobby were behind the success of Donald Trump and hence he wants to implement the vision of Greater Israel.

**Urdu Times** (February 11) in its editorial has condemned the efforts to make Gaza an American colony. The newspaper said though Gaza is small, it is a geographically important region. There is huge presence of minerals and gas there. Gaza got totally destroyed in the past one year's war.

**Munsif** (February 7) in its editorial has described this plan of Trump as extremely scary and a threat to world peace. The newspaper said that Trump wants to push the world towards a new war. Currently, the Gaza Strip doesn't need US soldiers, instead it needs humanitarian aid. If Trump cannot do this, he has no right to rub salt on the wounds of Arabs.

**Etemaad** (February 11) states that member of Saudi Arabia's Majlis Al-Shura, Yousef bin Trad Al-Saadoun has rejected this plan of US President. Taking a jibe, he said Israelis should be evicted from Palestinian region and settled in Alaska and Greenland. On the other hand, Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in an interview to an Israeli television channel, said that Saudi has lot of land with them. They should settle Palestinians in their land and declare it as independent Palestinian state.

**Siasat** (February 16) states that Saudi government has announced to convene a summit of four Arab countries on February 20. In this meeting, a discussion will be held on the Gaza plan of US President. This includes Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, UAE and the president of Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas.

**Qaumi Tanzeem** (February 4) states that Egypt government has announced that it has clear vision about the rebuilding of Gaza. As per which, no Palestinian has to leave Gaza. A spokesperson of Egypt government said all Arab nations agree on our plan and in this connection, we are also holding talks with United Nations. We want this plan to be implemented with the cooperation of United Nations. ■

## US helps Israel with weapons

**Munsif** (February 17) states that Israel's defence ministry has announced that ships loaded with 1800 Mk-84 bombs weighing 2,000 pounds, or approximately

907 kg, were being transported by sea from the US to Ashdod port in Israel. From there these bombs were loaded into several trucks and taken to the bases of



Israel Air Force. Due to this, the military strength of Israel has increased. Israel's defence ministry said this has proved that US has been committed to providing military aid to Israel. Israel's defence ministry said that ever since the October 2023 Hamas attack on Israel till today, the US has provided Israel with 76,000 tonnes of military equipment. Recently, after the visit of Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the US, the US administration has given its nod to provide Israel with bombs, guided missiles and other military equipment. It is being said that these equipment were worth seven billion dollars.

It is being said that the former President of US Joe Biden had imposed a ban on delivering weapons to Israel, but after Donald Trump took office as the President, the supply of weapons has started again. After the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, the Biden administration sent bombs weighing

2,000 pounds to Israel, but after the Israeli attack on civilian areas in Gaza, the Biden administration refused to send the second consignment of weapons to Israel. Now, Trump has reinstated it. The future of ceasefire in Gaza has landed in trouble due to the sending of US weapons to Israel. Netanyahu has welcomed the US military aid. He thanked President Trump for the same. Within a few hours of US Secretary of State arriving in Israel, Hamas released three other Israeli hostages. Netanyahu said that due to the efforts of Trump, Hamas was forced to release Israeli hostages.

**Qaumi Tanzeem** (February 2) states that in a report of Wall Street Journal, it has been claimed that the US might be supplying weapons worth one billion dollars to Israel. This includes 4,700 bombs as well. Each of these bombs weighs 1,000 pounds. It is worth mentioning that Israeli military is using these bombs in West Bank.

## Formation of new government in Lebanon

**Siasat** (February 10) reports that the new Prime Minister of Lebanon Nawaf Salam has constituted his cabinet. There are 24 ministers in the new cabinet, among them 12 are Christians and 12 are Muslims. According to American news agency AP, Lebanon President Joseph Khaleel Aoun has announced that he has accepted the

resignation of the previous caretaker government and issued the decree for the formation of the new government. Addressing the first meeting of the cabinet, Lebanese Prime Minister Salam said he is hopeful that this would be a welfare government, because welfare and development are the sole path for the



progress of Lebanon. We have started the work for a new Lebanon with the new President. He said we have included ministers from different backgrounds in our cabinet, but this will not create any hurdles in the official work. We have satisfied everyone and we all will work together. Lebanon President Joseph Aoun also held a special meeting with the emissary of the US President and assured him that the present government will be stable and it will last longer.

**Hindustan** (February 7) states that Lebanon President Joseph Aoun has appealed to France to put pressure on Israel to withdraw Israeli Army from south Lebanon under the ceasefire agreement. Israeli soldiers are deployed in Lebanon's border areas from September last year. As per the ceasefire agreement signed on

November 27, the Israeli Army was supposed to withdraw from these Lebanese territories, but Israel did not withdraw its soldiers.

Earlier, Lebanon's former prime minister Najib Makati has also urged France and the US that they put pressure on Israel to implement the ceasefire agreement. The Lebanon government alleged that the Israeli

Army is destroying the public properties in areas of south Lebanon which it has occupied. The Israeli Army has blocked roads in several areas in south Lebanon and erected barbed wires there. As per the ceasefire agreement, the Israeli soldiers were supposed to leave Lebanon by January 27. Later the US extended this period by another 23 days. Now, the Israeli Army should leave Lebanese territories by February 18. It is worth mentioning that when a few Lebanese refugees were returning home on January 29, an Israeli Army drone attacked them. A few people were killed in this attack. As per the agreement, Israel will establish two military outposts at Ramiyah locality in south Lebanon. While rest of the roads will be opened so that the displaced people from Lebanon can return to their homes.

## Protests in Lebanon against ban on Iranian planes

**Qaumi Tanzeem** (February 16) states that Lebanon has stopped Iranian planes from landing in Beirut airport. An aircraft which was stopped from landing in Beirut airport was carrying lakhs of dollars from Iran for Hezbollah. This money was supposed to be given to Hezbollah so that it could reconstitute its militia. In a retaliatory action, Iran has stopped two Lebanese aircraft from landing in Tehran airport. Lebanon's Director General of Civil Aviation department said two aircraft were sent to Tehran to bring back Lebanese citizens trapped in Tehran, but the Iran government did not give permission to land

them in Tehran airport. According to Iran's civil aviation department, these aircraft were stopped because they did not take prior permission from the Iran government.

**Inqilab** (February 17) states that Hezbollah has protested against Lebanese government for not allowing Iranian plane to land at Beirut airport. Hezbollah supporters held a massive rally at Beirut airport. The Lebanese army had to use tear-gas shells to disperse the protesters. The Lebanese defence ministry sent a message to Iran that they won't allow any of their planes to fly to Beirut. Israel has indicated to Lebanon through the US that in case



Iranian aircraft lands in Lebanon's airport, Israeli military will target them. Following this threat by Israel, the air traffic between Lebanon and Israel has been stopped.

As per another news, the Hezbollah attacked the vehicles of United Nations Peace Keeping Force in Lebanon and set them on fire. In this attack, a senior official of the peacekeeping force got injured. Hezbollah carried out this attack in protest against not allowing Iranian planes to land

in Rafiq Hariri International Airport in Beirut. The United Nations has condemned this attack and said that this has hampered the efforts to restore security and stability in southern Lebanon. The United Nations has demanded the Lebanon government to conduct an investigation into the entire incident. On the other hand, Lebanon's defence ministry has claimed that Hezbollah has been holding massive protests near the Beirut airport and the Lebanese army has taken strong action against the protesters. The army has appealed to the citizens that they do not take part in violent protests, because Lebanon is currently passing through a critical period. The United Nations has directed the peacekeeping force that they do not go near the Beirut airport. ■

## Saudi Arabia changes visa rules for Haj



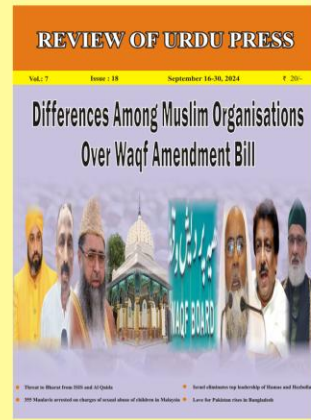
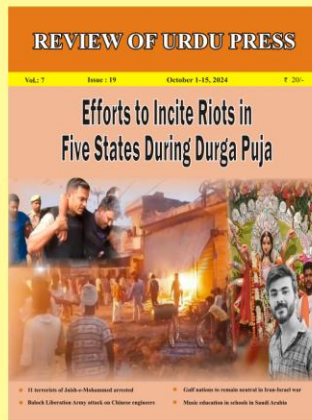
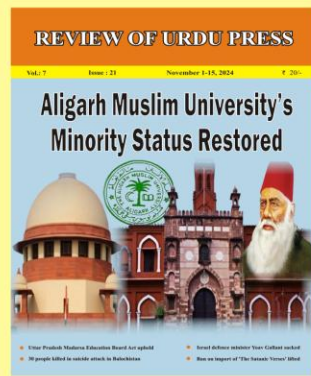
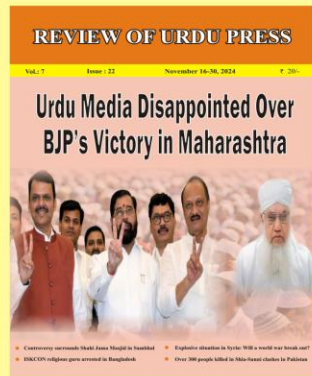
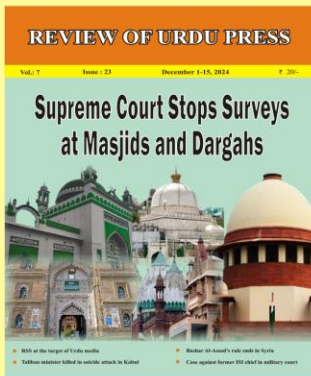
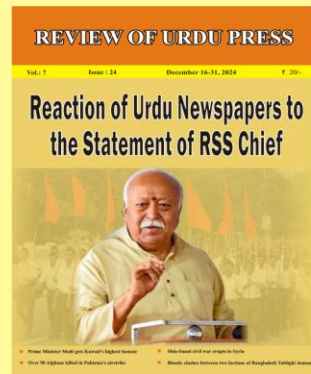
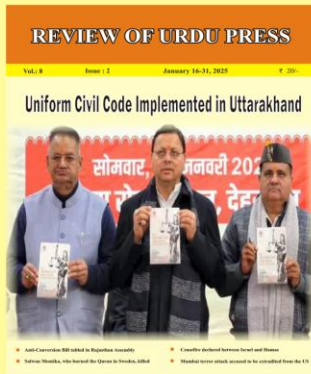
**Urdu Times** (February 9) reports that Saudi Arabia has made massive changes in visa rules for Haj 2025. These changes will affect 14 countries, including India. As per the new rules, the multiple entry visa for the citizens of these countries has been postponed indefinitely. Now, Haj yatris will be able to obtain only a single entry visa. This step has been taken to stop illegal Haj pilgrims because people obtain multiple entry visa and take part in Haj pilgrimage. Due to this, there is often a huge rush in Mecca. As per the new policy, the Haj pilgrims of 14 countries for whom the single entry visa has been made applicable, include India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, Egypt, Algeria,

Morocco, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Nigeria, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen.

Now, the Haj pilgrims from these countries can apply only for single entry visa. The visa period will be for 30 days. This restriction will not be applicable for Umrah, diplomatic and residential visas. Last year, due to huge rush and extreme heat, nearly 2,000 people died, majority among them were illegal Haj pilgrims. Due to this, the Saudi government had to face huge criticism.

**Siasat** (February 11) states that the Saudi government has imposed a ban on taking photos at Masjid Al-Haram (Mecca) during Umrah. The government has directed that without government's permission, no individual should take photo. This apart, the Saudi Arab government has also started the system of registration for Haj. The Haj and Umrah Ministry of Saudi Arabia said that in 2025, only such people will be given visa, who are doing Haj for the first time. This apart, the Haj pilgrims will not be allowed to bring children along with them. ■





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