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PROTEST WATCH

UTTAR PRADESH

Akhilesh flags off protest march at SP office



SP chief Akhilesh Yadav flags off a protest march by party legislators against the CAA, NRC and NPR in Lucknow on Tuesday. Vishal Srivastav

Lucknow: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav flagged off a “bicycle protest” from his party office to the Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha, where SP MLAs participated in a special session of the state Assembly convened to ratify the 126th Constitutional amendment. The “bicycle protest” started with SP leaders shouting slo-

gans against the new citizenship law, the NRC and the NPR: “Nahi chahiye NPR, chahiye humko rojgar”, “NPR form nahi bharenge, nahi bharengi” and “Nagrikta Satyagrah karengi” (“We don’t want NPR, we want employment”, “We won’t fill the NPR forms, we won’t fill”, and “We want a citizenship satyagrah”). **ENS**

TAMIL NADU

Tamil orator booked over ‘provocative remarks’

Tirunelveli (TN): Flooded with a volley of complaints seeking action over his “provocative” remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, police have booked a Tamil orator on charges, including instigating violence and rift between two communities. As police reached his residence here on Tuesday to arrest Nellai Kannan, who was associated with the Congress, they were told he was “suffering from chest pain” following which they took him to a hospital in an ambulance, police said. Kannan landed in trouble after a video of his purported speech at a meeting against CAA organised by the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) here on Saturday went



Nellai Kannan

viral on social media and the BJP lodged a police complaint. State BJP spokesperson Narayanan Thirupathi alleged that Kannan called out the names of Prime Minister and Home Minister at the meeting and told the gathering he was “shocked as to why Muslims have not yet killed the Prime Minister and Home Minister...” **PTI**

UAE

Expats submit memorandum

Dubai: A group of Indian expats in the UAE have submitted a memorandum to the Indian Embassy in Abu Dhabi expressing concerns over the CAA which many claim is “discriminatory” on religious grounds, according to a media report. Around 30 people from the Indian community met with the embassy officials on Sunday to voice their opposition with the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the Gulf News reported. **PTI**

TRIPURA

IPFT threatens to relaunch stir

Agartala: Indigenous Peoples Front of Tripura (IPFT), an ally of the ruling BJP, on Tuesday threatened to launch a movement if the state is not exempted from the purview of the CAA. The party will also agitate for a separate state for tribals of the state, IPFT assistant general secretary, Mangol Debbarna, who is also the spokesperson of the party, said. “We have decided to organise indefinite sit-in at Khumulwng... from January 6,” he said. **PTI**

MAHARASHTRA

Students take lead in rallies against NRC, CAA



A protest against CAA, NRC and NPR in Pune. Pavan Khengre

Pune: Many rose in protest against Citizen (Amendment) Act (CAA), National Register of Citizens (NRC) and National Population Register (NPR) in the last two weeks, students in their early twenties stood out as they took the lead with the help of different social organisations and groups. Afroz Mulla, a 23-year-old final year law student of Abdul Kadir Khan New Law Academy, said, “We organised these protests

against the government’s policies. These policies, whether it is about Kashmir, CAA, NRC or NPR, are against our culture of diversity and secularism. I have organised protests before too, but it was hard to mobilise crowds in those protests. However, in the recent protests against CAA and NRC, people willingly joined, so it’s self-mobilised; we just needed to share the date and time of the protest.” **ENS**

OPPOSITION TO CAA, NRC

With 9 rallies in 2 weeks, Mamata seeks to emerge as pivot of protest

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA & SANTANU CHOWDHURY
KOLKATA, DECEMBER 31

IN HER bid to checkmate the BJP in West Bengal on the new citizenship law and proposed NRC (National Register of Citizens), TMC chief Mamata Banerjee, who has hit the streets nine times in the last fortnight, is also trying to emerge as the central political pivot of the anti-CAA, NRC protest on the national level.

Besides promising to give Rs 5 lakh to the families of the two men killed in the protests in Mangaluru after the BJP government in Karnataka, withheld the announced compensation, her party leaders also met the families of those arrested in Lucknow in connection with the violent protests there and expressed full support to them.

Banerjee’s protest marches and rallies, which have become a recurrent event in the state, in their sights and sounds highlight Bengali cultural traits with a message of secularism and unity. Even choices of starting points and end-points of her street marches are strategically chosen — like Swami Vivekananda’s ancestral house, Rabindranath Tagore’s Jorasanko Thakurbari among others.

In the protest marches or padayatra, besides “intellectuals”, representatives of religious bodies — Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists — walk with her. Symbols of Bengali culture, such as women in sarees blowing



Mamata Banerjee at a protest rally against the new citizenship law in Purulia on Monday. Express

conch shells and playing ‘*kasor ghonta*’ (brass bells), are a regular feature. In her Purulia march on Monday, traditional tribal drummers were also brought in.

In her speeches, Banerjee invokes freedom fighters from Mahatma Gandhi to Jawaharlal Nehru and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose to Bengali icons. “People who voted for past Prime Ministers of the country such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, IK Gujral, Manmohan Singh and others are being asked to prove their citizenship. Now, the Centre is asking people to show their documents or else you will be driven out of this country. Let me tell you clearly, a state government implements policies of the central government. We are saying it clearly that there will be no CAA and NRC in Bengal. We have also stopped NPR (National Population Register)

process for now. We will not allow a single citizen to be driven out of this country. We all are citizens,” Banerjee said in Purulia.

Besides targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, she, in all of her speeches, expresses solidarity with protesting students and minorities throughout the country.

“Once you attain the age of 18 you are entitled to cast your votes. Now, if you protest, which is also your right, why should the government use force to stop you? We are fully supporting students who have led protests across the country as it is their democratic right to do so,” she had said in one of her rallies in Kolkata last week.

While the BJP has taken out a counter-rally in Kolkata in support of the amended citizenship law and has been wooing

EXPLAINED **E** Bypoll victory boost for Mamata

ACCORDING TO some political observers, the TMC’s victory in the recent Assembly bypolls in three seats gave Mamata Banerjee confidence to take on the BJP on the issue of NRC and the new citizenship law. Even the losing BJP candidates in the bypoll had blamed their defeat on the fear of NRC among the people following its implementation in neighbouring Assam, where over 19 lakh people were left out of the citizenship roll.

refugee communities, including Matuas, the party is yet to make its stand clear on NRC.

“Mamata Banerjee is trying to mislead people regarding the CAA (new citizenship law). The law does not take away citizenship from anyone. It will only offer citizenship to religious minorities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The TMC is also supporting those who carried out protests across the state after the passage of the Bill in Parliament. This clearly shows how desperate the TMC has become to take political mileage out of CAA protests,” said West Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh.

Meerut police announce reward for info on ‘shooters’

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MEERUT, DECEMBER 31

MEERUT POLICE have announced a reward of Rs 20,000 to anyone giving information about the three men, who, they said, fired at policemen during the protests against the new citizenship law and proposed NRC on December 20.

At least five persons were killed with firearm wounds during the protest. The police had earlier said that while they had fired in the air but no one was killed in police firing. Several policemen were also injured in the protest.

According to police, three men have been spotted in CCTV footages with their faces covered firing on police with country-made guns. Police said that one of them have been identified as Faizal, a resident of Kareem Nagar in Nauchandi area of Meerut, while the identity of the remaining two has not been disclosed. Police also raided Faizal’s home late Monday evening.

Police have so far registered 14 FIRs at four police stations — Nauchandi, Kotwali, Brahmipuri and Lisadi Gate — and around 180 people have been named in them. At least 15 people have been arrested so far.

UP govt sends report to MHA seeking ban on PFI

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 31

THE BJP government in Uttar Pradesh has a report to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) recommending a ban on the Popular Front of India (PFI). It has accused the organisation and its political front — Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) — of “masterminding and instigating violence” during the recent protests against the new citizenship law and proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC).

“We have written to the Union Home Ministry, recommending that the PFI should be banned,” Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police (DGP) OP Singh said here on Tuesday.

UP Police has claimed that 11 PFI members, including its UP unit president Waseem Ahmed, have been arrested on charges of instigating violence in the recent protests.

The recommendation has been made on the basis of a detailed report submitted by UP DGP headquarters containing activities of the outfit and its members in the state for about a decade.

According to the report, PFI

PFI is SIMI reincarnation, says Dy CM

Lucknow: Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya on Tuesday said that the PFI in a way is the “incarnation” of the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI). “The PFI’s role has been established in vandalism in the state... The truth is emerging through the probe. If SIMI reappears in any form, it will be crushed,” he said. **ENS**

started its activities in 2010 in a few districts of Uttar Pradesh including, Lucknow, Barabanki, Bahraich, Muzaffarnagar, Shamli, Meerut and Muzaffarnagar.

“Since 201, we have registered 13 cases against PFI members in the state. Of them, six cases were lodged in connection with the recent protest and the violence... The six cases are lodged in Lucknow, Shamli and Meerut,” said a senior police officer involved in preparing the

Large turnout expected for 202nd anniversary of Battle of Bhima Koregaon, security in place

CHANDAN HAYGUNDE & SUSHANT KULKARNI
PUNE, DECEMBER 31

HEAVY SECURITY arrangements have been put in place near the Jaystambh in Perne village in Pune district, as lakhs of people are expected to gather at the war memorial to pay their respects on the 202nd anniversary of the Battle of Bhima Koregaon, on January 1.

People from different parts of the state have already started camping in the area.

As per the Dalit narrative, 500 Mahar soldiers, who were part of the British Army, defeated a 25,000-strong force of Peshwas (who were Brahmins), in the Battle of Bhima Koregaon. Lakhs of members of Mahar and other communities visit the Jaystambh on January 1 to pay their respects. They believe that Mahar soldiers in the British Army fought a “war for freedom”

against the alleged castiessm of the Peshwas.

Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar is known to have visited the Jaystambh on January 1, 1927, where he made a speech against a British policy enacted later, which banned the entry of Mahars into the British Army.

As the Jaystambh became a crucial site for the Ambedkarite movement, the number of people visiting the war memorial on January 1 every year went up significantly. Two years earlier, on the 200th anniversary of the battle, violence had broken out in the area. Clashes between different communities left one person dead and several others injured. Multiple cases have been filed over the violence and the then state government, headed by Devendra Fadnavis, had set up a probe commission to ascertain the sequence of events that led to it.

A year after the violence, on the 201st battle anniversary on



The decorated Jaystambh at Perne village in Pune district. Ashish Kale

January 1 this year, an estimated eight to ten lakh people from across the state and country visited the Jaystambh, said police sources. This included a significant number of “first-time visi-

tors’, they said. Programmes to mark the anniversary, held amid intense police security, remained peaceful.

This year, an equally large number of visitors are expected at Jaystambh, and the administration has made several arrangements for them.

“Various amenities, facilities and safety measures have been put in place by the administration and the police. The ground deployment of over 5,000 policemen will be overseen by 10 additional superintendents, 30 deputy superintendents and 400 police officers.

An additional 12 companies of the State Reserve Police Force and nearly 2,000 volunteers will take the total deployment strength to 10,000,” said Inspector General of Police, Kolhapur Range. Suhas Warke.

He added, “Fourteen parking spaces have been made available and the entire region is under CCTV surveillance. A close watch

ASSAM

NRC office prepares status report, all eyes on SC hearing

ABHISHEK SAHA
GUWAHATI, DECEMBER 31

AUTHORITIES AT the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam are preparing a status report of the work done so far to be submitted to the Registrar General of India (RGI) even as all eyes are on the Supreme Court hearing on January 6 to decide the future course of action.

Assam’s new NRC coordinator Hitesh Dev Sarma said, “The priority right now is to prepare a status report for the RGI on the work that has been done till now. In less than a week from now, it will be prepared.”

The final NRC published on August 31 excluded 19 lakh people but the rejection order has not been issued for five months now. Those excluded will be able to file appeals against their exclusion at the Foreigners’ Tribunals only with the rejection order specifying the cause of rejection.

Without specifying the date for issuance of rejection orders, Sarma said that work will proceed according to directions of the Supreme Court in the next hearing.

The fate of the Assam NRC has been in limbo after Home Minister Amit Shah told Parliament in November that a fresh NRC for Assam would be conducted along with a nationwide NRC. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi has distanced his government from pan-India NRC following massive protests across India against the new citizenship law and the proposed nationwide NRC.

However, the Assam government has said that if a pan-India NRC does not happen then the

AMU

V-C regrets police action, assures students of safety

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
ALIGARH (UP), DECEMBER 31

AMU VICE-CHANCELLOR Tariq Mansoor on Tuesday regretted police action during the anti-CAA protest on campus on December 15 night and sought to assure students of their safety and right to protest peacefully.

Prof Mansoor gave the assurance to students and their parents in an open letter, written before the varsity reopens on January 6 after its winter break. “I want to tell you and your families that I regret what happened (on December 15),” the V-C wrote.

Referring to the decision to call in police on December 15, he said it was taken in “good faith and a

state will approach the Supreme Court and the NRC in its present will not be accepted under any circumstance.

On December 23, Assam Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that the Assam government’s plea for re-verification of the names included in NRC is still with the Supreme Court along with several petitions filed by organisations such as All Assam Students’ Union (AASU) and Assam Public Works (APW).

“The next hearing of the case is on January 6. Whatever the SC says on that day, we will work according to that,” NRC coordinator Sarma said.

Sarma’s appointment followed the departure of his predecessor Prateek Hajela, a 1995-batch IAS officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre, who led the NRC preparation exercise as the state coordinator since 2013. On October 18, the Supreme Court ordered an inter-cadre transfer of Hajela to Madhya Pradesh after his relationship with the state government deteriorated.

But Sarma’s appointment led to a political controversy, primarily due to his political views expressed on social media. “That in pursuant to the various controversial posts as shared by Mr Dev Sarma in social media against a particular community, it is not desirable to appoint such a biased person to handle a highly sensitive position,” Congress’s Barpeta MP Abdul Khaleque wrote to the Governor of Assam. “If Dev Sarma is at the helm of affair there is every likelihood that the process of such re-verification and other incidental activities would be done in a biased manner.”

clear conscience” as it had become imperative to disperse protesters who had become charged up over a rumour that two student protesters at Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi had been killed.

The V-C appealed to students “to consider with an open mind” the circumstances that compelled him to take the unpleasant decision of inviting the police to enter the campus. Prof Mansoor wrote that he would “fully share” their concerns on any subject provided it is done “in a peaceful and democratic manner”.

The V-C also assured the students of their “safety and well-being when the university re-opens” and sought their support in completing the academic year smoothly.

Thrashed by BJP workers near JU campus, claims professor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
KOLKATA, DECEMBER 31

A JADAVPUR University (JU) teacher has alleged that she was “roughed up” by a few women members of the BJP near the varsity campus for protesting against the disparaging remarks made against the institute and a particular community.

The BJP leadership, however, denied any involvement in the incident and said several “ultra-Left supporters” had staged agitation in the vicinity of a party meeting, near the campus, on Monday, but its workers maintained restraint.

Doyeeta Majumder also said that she has filed a complaint with police.

A senior police officer said barricades were put up between the members of two groups as they “engaged in sloganeering and counter-sloganeering”.