

No FIR lodged yet over hate speeches

Delhi HC gives India govt a month to reply

THE STATESMAN/ANN

The Delhi High Court hearing a plea demanding registration of FIRs against certain BJP leaders who allegedly made hate speeches thereby inciting violence in Northeast Delhi, yesterday gave the Centre four weeks to file its response in the case while making it a party in the matter.

A two-judge bench of justices DN Patel and C Harishankar listed the matter for further hearing on April 13.

The court was responding to a petition by retired bureaucrat Harsh Mander, who had sought a judicial enquiry into the incidents of violence, FIR against culprits, compensation for the riots' victims and deployment of Army in the affected areas.

As the hearing began, counsel for petitioner Harsh Mander — Colin Gonsalves — said protests against CAA were going on peacefully, barring some issues like traffic jams. However, the slogans raised in the hate speeches directed people to kill, he said.

"Goli Maaro (shoot the traitors) became the favourite slogan of a political party," he said, adding that they should be charged with murder, "no matter who they are."

He called for immediate FIRs against the ones who made hate speeches and said that "the decision of their arrest can be made later."

Earlier on Wednesday, a furious two-judge high court bench comprising Justices S Muralidhar and Talwant Singh, directed the Delhi Police to take a "conscious decision" on the registration of FIRs against three prominent political leaders for alleged hate speeches.

However, hours later, in a major turn of events, Justice Muralidhar was transferred to the Punjab and Haryana High Court, which the Centre has termed as "routine affair".



(From left, clockwise) A Congress delegation led by party chief Sonia Gandhi (C) walk to meet India's President Ram Nath Kovind and submit a memorandum on the violence in the capital city, in New Delhi, yesterday; activists of the All India Trinamool Congress party in Kolkata hold electric candles during a vigil condemning the recent violence in New Delhi; and police personnel detain members of Communist Party of India (CPI) as they demand the resignation of Union Home Minister Amit Shah over the violence.



Hindu man battling for life after saving six Muslims

Most accounts of violence are also interspersed with stories of extreme resilience, humanity and compassion. The case of New Delhi is no different.

Amid violence over a citizenship law, there were many who whole-heartedly came out in support of those in need and offered help in every capacity. Gurdwaras in Delhi opened their doors for Muslim families forced to flee their homes. There were several warm stories of people saving lives of those targeted.

In one such case, a Hindu man saved lives of his six Muslim neighbours when an unruly mob set their house on fire, reports India Times. When Premkant Baghel saw his Muslim neighbour's house being set ablaze he stepped out to help them. He said the Hindu-Muslim communities live in harmony in Shiv Vihar, but the riots brought out a different side. Miscreants threw petrol bombs and set Muslim homes on fire. As soon as Baghel got to know about the incident, he ventured out to save the lives of people trapped inside the burning house.

Baghel put his own life in danger and saved the lives of six of his neighbours. Baghel suffered severe burns while saving his friend's aged mother who was trapped inside in fire.

Even as Baghel saved several lives, no one offered a vehicle to take him to a hospital. The neighbours called an ambulance but it never arrived... Baghel spent the night at his house with 70 per cent burns. In the morning, he was taken to GTB Hospital, where he was given immediate medical attention, according to India Times.

Since winning a second term, Modi's government has revoked the partial autonomy of Kashmir and said it wants to conduct a nationwide citizens' register to weed out "infiltrators". These measures, plus the citizenship law, have stoked fears that Modi's master plan is to remould India as a Hindu nation, something he denies.

SOURCE: INDIA TIMES ONLINE

'We lost a brother'

Interfaith solidarity on display as people mourn loss of their kin

AGENCIES

Gul Mohammad had a flourishing footwear business until masked men armed with crude petrol bombs burnt down his shops during Delhi's worst violence in decades, shattering the harmony between Hindus and Muslims in the neighbourhood.

The Hindu-majority neighbourhood of Ashok Nagar on the northeast fringes of India's capital was once held up as an example of how people from different religious backgrounds could live side-by-side peacefully.

Now, it is rife with suspicion as locals traumatised by the violence that has killed at least 38 people and injured many said they were struggling to come to terms with what happened.

The violence broke out after protests against a citizenship law that critics say is anti-Muslim descended into battles between Hindus and Muslims on Monday and Tuesday.

In the wake of the violence, stories emerged of people beaten, stabbed or shot to death by mobs, but also of Hindu neighbours who offered refuge to their Muslim friends.

Goat farmer Anwar Chotu, 58, was dragged out of his home in Shiv Vihar, shot dead and his body thrown into a fire by rioters, his brother Mohammad Chotu told AFP.

Waiting outside the morgue to collect his body, Mohammad Chotu said he managed to stay alive after fleeing to his Hindu neighbour's home with his wife and five children.

"They gave us refuge and protected us even after some of the attackers banged on their door to check if they were hiding us," he said.

Bilkis, a mother-of-seven whose house in Ashok Nagar was also destroyed during the rampage, said her Hindu neighbours took in her family as she blamed outsiders for the mayhem.

"They (Hindu neighbours) gave us buckets of water to



douse the fire. They also offered us tea," said Bilkis, who uses only one name.

Muslim residents of Ashok Nagar -- a poor, working-class neighbourhood crisscrossed by narrow alleys and open sewers -- said they had always felt welcomed.

But overwhelmed by grief over losing their homes and livelihoods, and believing they were targeted by mobs,

some said they didn't know if they could trust their neighbours again.

"Our (Hindu) neighbours really tried to help us a lot. But at times like this, our faith gets shaken. We never ever imagined that something like this will ever happen," Mohammad Saleem told AFP.

Outside the morgue on Wednesday, Hindu and Muslim families waiting for the bodies of their loved ones to be released were united by one emotion -- grief.

There, Rohit Solanki was waiting for his brother's body, Rahul. He was shot in the neck on Monday evening as he left his home to go shopping.

The younger Solanki said that he has been living in Mustafabad, a Muslim-dominated area, all his life and also said he had never experienced any animosity between the Hindu and Muslim communities.

As Rahul's body was brought out on the stretcher from the mortuary, four of his friends in their 20s, including two women, broke down. They were inconsolable.

One, Mohammad Shahbaz Alam, cried and hugged his friend, Vikas, over the loss of Solanki.

"We were not just colleagues. We all were a family," Alam told Al Jazeera.

"In this Hindu-Muslim politics, we both lost a brother in Rahul [Solanki]," said Vikas, as tears rolled down his face.

"Nothing can be achieved through violence. It is just senseless and no-one is a winner here," Vinod Kumar, whose uncle Vir Bhan was shot dead during clashes on Monday, told AFP.

Failure of leadership

Sanders blasts Trump for Delhi response

THE STATESMAN/ANN

A day after US lawmakers reacted sharply to the violence in the national capital, frontrunner in the Democratic presidential election, Bernie Sanders slammed US President Donald Trump for failing to address the issue of human rights while he was visiting India.

Asked about incidents of violence during his visit, the US president had said, "As far as the individual attacks, I heard about it, but I didn't discuss that with him (PM Modi). That's up to India."

Reacting to the issue, Bernie Sanders on Wednesday tweeted, "Over 200 million Muslims call India home. Widespread anti-Muslim mob violence has killed at least 27 and injured many more. Trump responds by saying 'That's up to India'. This is a failure of leadership on human rights."

Bernie Sanders is the second Democratic presidential nominee after Senator Elizabeth Warren to speak against the violence over the Citizenship Amendment Act in New Delhi.

Apart from the Democratic presidential candidate, US House Foreign Affairs Committee too expressed concern over the developments on Wednesday.

Warner and Cornyn are co-chairs of the Senate India Caucus, the largest country-specific caucus in the US Senate. Congressman Jamie Raskin said he was horrified by the violence, which was fueled by religious hatred and fanaticism.

"Liberal democracies must protect religious freedom and pluralism, and avoid the path of discrimination and bigotry," the Congressman said. Richard N Hass, who heads the powerful Council on Foreign Relations, said

the reason for India's relative success has been that its large Muslim minority saw itself as Indian.

"But this is at risk owing to govt attempts to exploit identity politics for political advantage," he said. Earlier in the day, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom urged the Government of India to take swift action for the safety of its citizens.



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi gestures as he walks along with Myanmar's President Win Myint before a meeting in New Delhi, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

MALAYSIA CRISIS

Parliament to decide on next PM

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's parliament will convene Monday to decide on the country's next prime minister after days of horse-trading failed to break an impasse, said Mahathir Mohamad.

Mahathir quit this week as premier and the government collapsed, following a bid to form a new coalition without his designated successor Anwar Ibrahim and stop him becoming leader.

Mahathir, at 94 the world's oldest leader, and Anwar are now locked in a power struggle, reviving a rivalry that has shaped politics in the Southeast Asian nation for two decades.

The king appoints the prime minister and had interviewed the country's MPs to work out who they backed, but Mahathir said no candidate with enough support emerged.

A candidate must have the backing of at least 112 MPs to become premier.

Mahathir said the legislature would sit on Monday to determine who has sufficient backing to become premier.

"However if the (parliament) fails to find a person with a majority, then we will have to go for a snap election," added Mahathir.

He added his party might nominate his ally Muhyiddin Yassin, who was interior minister until the government collapsed, as a candidate.

Three parties from the former ruling coalition have already put Anwar's name forward.

In his first comments since the crisis erupted, Mahathir said Wednesday he wanted to form a unity government and was willing to return as premier if he had enough support -- but political leaders rejected that idea.

WHICH COUNTRIES ARE AFFECTED?

With governments scrambling to contain a slew of new coronavirus cases popping up across Europe, here is an overview of the countries affected, where people have died and the precautions being taken.

ITALY: With 12 deaths and 400 infections, Italy is the European country worst affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. It has also been a point of contagion with many cases in other countries involving people who returned home after travelling in infection-hit areas of northern Italy.

FRANCE: France has so far registered 18 infections and two deaths, and has urged its nationals to delay any plans to visit virus hotspots in northern Italy.

GERMANY: In Germany, 18 people have been infected including two diagnosed on Tuesday. One is a 25-year-old man believed to have been infected in the Italian city of Milan.

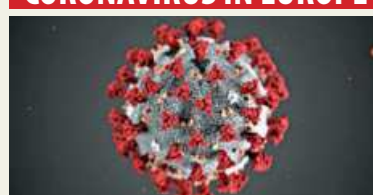
BRITAIN: Britain has so far recorded 13 cases since the start of the epidemic. The government has requested travellers returning from affected areas in northern Italy, China, South Korea and Iran to isolate themselves and inform authorities.

SPAIN: The same has happened in Spain, which has registered 12 cases, 10 of which have been detected since Monday. Nine involved Italians or people who had recently visited Italy.

CROATIA: Three people have tested positive for the virus, including a young man who recently stayed in Italy and his brother.

AUSTRIA: A young Italian couple have tested positive. The Innsbruck hotel where the woman worked as a receptionist was initially

CORONAVIRUS IN EUROPE



placed in quarantine but the measure was lifted on Wednesday following tests.

FINLAND: Two virus infections were confirmed Wednesday -- a Chinese tourist in Lapland and a second case involving a Finnish national who had recently visited northern Italy.

SWEDEN: Two cases have been detected so far.

BELGIUM: One case was detected in a Belgian national who was repatriated from

Wuhan in early February. He has completed his quarantine period.

GEORGIA: Georgia on Wednesday announced the first confirmed case of the novel coronavirus in the South Caucasus region.

GREECE: Athens announced its first infection on Wednesday, a woman aged 38 who had recently returned from northern Italy.

NORTH MACEDONIA: One case has been detected -- a woman who recently returned from Italy.

SWITZERLAND: A first case was detected on Tuesday in a man in his 70s who was infected near Milan.

ROMANIA: Romania reported its first case on Wednesday -- a man who was in contact with an Italian who visited the country last week.

NORWAY: Norwegian health authorities announced Wednesday the first case of the new coronavirus in the Nordic nation in someone who returned from China last week.

DENMARK: Denmark reported its first coronavirus case yesterday, a man who had returned from a Italy.

CORONAVIRUS FEAR

Pakistan shuts schools, suspends Iran flights

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan yesterday shut schools in several areas and suspended flights to and from Iran to try to stop the spread of new coronavirus, after reporting its first cases of the infection, officials said.

The South Asian nation bordering China and Iran, both of which have been hit hard by the virus, reported its first two cases on Wednesday.

Both people had recently travelled to Iran as part of large groups of pilgrims from Pakistan's Shia Muslim community. Health officials have said both were "stable."

Authorities shut schools in the southern province of Sindh, including the country's largest city Karachi where the first case was reported, and the southwestern province of Baluchistan, which borders Iran. They also began to trace nearly 8,000 pilgrims who recently returned to the country from Iran.

Pakistan's Civil Aviation said it was suspending all flight operations with Iran

starting from Thursday evening till further notice. "We have decided to close the flights with Iran," the aviation's spokesman Sattar Khokhar told Reuters.

Three Iranian carriers run seven flights a week to and from Pakistan.

Pakistan closed its border with Iran on Sunday following the outbreak in the neighbouring country. 22 people have died so far from the new coronavirus in Iran.

Sindh's Provincial Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah said the 28 pilgrims whom the first cases were part of had been traced and would be scanned and monitored.

"We're going to the next step," he told a news conference in Karachi, adding that the Sindh government was out to trace all the 1,500 people who had returned to his province from Iran in the month of February. There are a total 8,000 such pilgrims across the country, he said.

"We're locating each one of them," Shah said.