

UK holds talks with Modi, ends 10-year boycott

AFP, Ahmedabad, India

Britain held talks yesterday with Indian regional leader Narendra Modi, ending a 10-year boycott over deadly religious riots in Gujarat state that left more than 2,000 dead, including three Britons.

Modi, a Hindu nationalist who is tipped as a possible future prime minister, came to power in Gujarat shortly before the 2002 riots and is accused of doing little to prevent India's worst religious violence since independence.

Since the riots, British officials had been banned from dealing directly with Modi but the government this month changed its policy and announced that its ambassador to India, James Bevan, would travel to Gujarat.

"Had a great meeting... to strengthen Gu-



UK ties in economic and social sectors," Modi said on Twitter after the meeting.

Gujarat is one of India's flagship states for attracting foreign direct investment, and Modi's office said the discussions included opportunities for British companies.

A British embassy spokesman said the ambassador was due to give details on the meeting in a press statement later in the day.

The riots in 2002 were triggered by the deaths of nearly 60 Hindu pilgrims in a train fire that was initially blamed on a mob of Muslims.

Modi is accused of failing to halt the orgy of revenge that left more than 2,000 people -- mainly Muslims -- dead, according to rights groups.

Kejriwal slapped legal notice

PTI, New Delhi

Activist Arvind Kejriwal was yesterday served with a legal notice by Delhi chief minister's political advisor Pawan Khera for allegedly defaming Sheila Dikshit.

Kejriwal has been asked to tender an "unconditional public apology" for levelling "baseless allegations and aspersions" using "foul and filthy" language.

The notice, which accused Kejriwal of making "derogatory" remarks about the chief minister, was sent to the activist by Dikshit's political adviser Pawan Khera.

The notice said the word "dalal" (broker) was used for the chief minister in a talk show.

Discrimination in Indian schools, study reveals

THE HINDU ONLINE

In what reveals the persistence of caste-based segregation of children in primary schools in rural Karnataka, around 13.7 percent of Dalit children surveyed in the State have claimed that their teacher had asked them to sit separately from 'higher caste' children in the classroom, says a study released by the Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy, Mangalore University.

Released on October 18 here, 'Discrimination and social exclusion: A study on the development experience of Dalits in Karnataka' was spread over ten taluks in Belgaum, Gulbarga, Chitradurga, Mysore and Kolar - chosen for their socio-cultural diversity and their considerable Scheduled Caste population.

Over ten months ending in July 2011, the study enumerated the harassment and discrimination faced by 2,425 Dalit families or 12,677 people in 50 villages, of

which 825 families have children going to primary school.

Interviews with members of Dalit households threw up the same disconcerting facts in all districts, and the study concluded that the "practice of untouchability by teachers" was responsible for the segregation.

Discrimination is also seen during midday meals, with around 114 families admitting that their children have had to sit separately during lunch and were served in a separate set of plates.

Researchers have observed that school authorities disallow Dalit children from serving food or entering the kitchen.

Shockingly, while 72.8 percent of the parents interviewed said their children have never been appointed class monitors, nearly 33 percent of the parents said their children have been given the task of cleaning classrooms on a "frequent" basis and "during school functions and festivals".

3 killed in Rakhine clashes

BBC ONLINE

Three people have been killed in clashes between Muslims and Buddhists in the western Burmese state of Rakhine, officials say.

Some 300 houses in a number of villages have been burnt down, Rakhine's attorney general told BBC Burmese.

The latest clashes began late on Sunday night in villages in Rakhine's Min Bya township, eyewitnesses told the BBC.

It is unclear what prompted the latest clashes. Muslims and Buddhists blame each other.

'ISI directing Taliban in Afghanistan'

PTI, Washington

Pakistan's spy agency ISI is directing the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, a US lawmaker has alleged, saying his view is based on his meetings with the people and officials in the war-torn country.

US military commanders at several levels of the chain of command indicated that they believe Pakistan and the ISI is directing the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, California's Republican Congressman Duncan Hunter told the UT San Diego Com.

Hina's visit postponed

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payan official visit to invite Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to attend the Developing-8 Summit in Islamabad on November 19-22.

The foreign ministry yesterday confirmed postponement of Hina's visit, but officials declined to make any comment when asked about the reason.

This would have been the highest-level visit by any Pakistani official since the Awami League-led grand alliance came to power about four years ago.

Diplomatic sources said the Pakistan foreign minister put off her visit as Sheikh Hasina is unlikely to attend the D-8 Summit. Foreign ministry

sources said in Dhaka the prime minister is going to pay a bilateral visit to Vietnam in the first week of next month and from there, she will attend the 9th Asia-Europe Meeting Summit of Heads of State and Government (ASEM9) to be hosted by Laos (on November 5-6).

There is, however, no schedule of the prime minister's visit to Pakistan to attend the D-8 Summit in the tentative programme list of the foreign ministry. Diplomatic sources said Sheikh Hasina's attendance is important since she played an important role in forming the D-8 grouping, and she led it for

two years (1999-2000).

The sources said in case the premier is not visiting Pakistan, she may send a representative to attend the summit. Representatives of any head of state or government can attend it.

Dhaka hosted D-8 Summit on March 1-2, 1999. As the D-8 chair rotates, it is now the turn of Islamabad to host the Summit.

Dhaka-Islamabad bilateral engagement in the last four years has been limited to the visits of Bangladesh's education and commerce ministers to Islamabad and the foreign secretary-level official consultation in December 2010.

The request for consular access to Nafis was made to the US government during a meeting between the officials of Bangladesh embassy and the US State Department on October 19.

The embassy officials, however, did not state the reasons behind Nafis'

refusal. Under the US law, the consular access is granted on the consent of the arrestee.

Meanwhile, Congressman Joseph Crowley said the relation between Bangladesh and the US would not be affected by Nafis' arrest.

"I don't believe that this is part of a larger Bangladeshi sentiment. This is isolated in my sense. I think most Muslims and the people from Bangladesh are hard working and good people," Crowley, the founder and

co-chair of the channel ekattor.tv on Monday.

Nafis was arrested on October 17 in an FBI sting operation.

He added, "...And here I said before, this is a bad apple. We have to find out more than that and to work on that."

The US congressman made the comments to journalists after exchanging greetings with the representatives of Bangladeshi Hindu community on the occasion of Sharodiya Durga Utsab at Weyside in New York, reports private

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