

European Parliament To Debate On Anti-CAA Resolution

Press Trust Of India

BRUSSELS: The European Parliament is set to debate and vote on a resolution tabled by some of its members against India's Citizenship Amendment Act, which it says marks a dangerous shift in the country's citizenship regime.

The resolution, tabled by the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) Group in the Parliament earlier this week, is set to be debated next Wednesday and voted on the day after.

It makes a reference to the Charter of the United Nations, Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as well as the India-EU Strategic Partnership Joint Action Plan signed in November 2005, and to the EU-India Thematic Dialogue on Human Rights as it urges the Indian authorities to "engage constructively" with those protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and consider their demands to repeal the "discriminatory CAA".

"The CAA marks a dangerous shift in the way citizenship will be determined in India and is set to create the largest statelessness crisis in the world and cause immense human suffering," it notes.

"Instead of addressing the

concerns, offering corrective action, calling for security forces to act with restraint and ensuring accountability, many government leaders have been engaging in efforts to discredit, rebuke and threaten the protesters," the resolution states. The CAA came into force in India last December amid protests in India and around the world.

The Indian government has stressed that the new Act does not deny any citizenship rights but has been brought in to protect the oppressed minorities of neighbouring countries and provide them citizenship.

As background, the resolution sets out that since the May 2019 election, the government of India has reinforced its nationalistic orientation as it also makes a reference to the revocation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, which removed the special constitutional status of the region.

The draft resolution, which falls under the category of Resolutions on topical subjects, expresses deep concern that India has created the legal grounds to strip millions of Muslims of the fundamental right of equal access to citizenship and that the CAA could be used, along with the National Register of Citizens, to render many Muslim citizens stateless.

Anti-CAA protests Indian Americans Mar R Day Celebrations In US



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Washington: India's 71st Republic Day celebrations in the US on Sunday were marred by some peaceful protests and marches by a large number of Indian Americans in various cities of the country against the recent changes in the citizenship law.

Among Indian Americans, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019, however, also had a fair share of its supporters who sought to counter protesters by asserting that India cares for Neighbouring Minorities and CAA Won't Impact Indian Citizens.

The supporters, however, appeared to be outnumbered by protesters, who held peaceful rallies and marches in various US cities, carrying anti-CAA banners and raising slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and demanding CAA's repeal and revocation of the proposed National Register for Citizens.

They raised the demand ruling that India's secular fabric is under threat.

In some of the cities, particularly New York, Chicago, Houston, Atlanta and San Francisco having Indian consulates, and at the Indian Embassy in Washington DC, the protesters shouted slogans like Bharat Mata Ki Jai and Hindu, Muslim Sikh, Isai: Aapas Mein Sab Bhai Bhai.

The protesters, however were countered by a number of Indian Americans who supported the enactment and congratulated the Modi Government for taking such a bold step.

The largest gathering of anti-CAA protesters was reported from Chicago where Indian Americans gathered in large numbers and formed several mile-long human chain.

In the American capital of Washington DC, more than 500 Indian Americans marched from a park near the White House to the Gandhi Statue in front of the Indian Embassy.



China Virus Death Toll Now At 80, More Than 2,700 Cases Confirmed

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Beijing: China continued to reel under deadly coronavirus epidemic on Monday with the death toll due to it sharply rising to 80 amid the country's National Health Commission reporting 2,744 confirmed cases of the fatal affliction till date.

The Commission also termed the condition of the 461 people being treated for the virus, officially known as 2019-nCoV, as "critical".

The Commission's said during the past 24 hours, 769 new confirmed cases, 3,806 new suspected cases and 24 deaths from the disease were reported.

By Sunday, the pneumonia situation had resulted in a total of 80 deaths, while 51 people had recovered and 5,794 remained as suspected patients, state run Xinhua news agency quoted the Commission as saying.

A total of 32,799 close contacts have been traced, the commission said, adding 30,453 among them were currently under medical observation while 583 others were discharged on Sunday. Almost all provinces in China except Tibet have reported the virus cases.

In addition, 17 confirmed cases were reported in Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions and Taiwan, besides eight

in Hong Kong, five in Macao and four in Taiwan.

Overseas, confirmed cases included seven in Thailand, four each in Australia and Singapore, three each in the United States, the Republic of Korea, Japan, France and Malaysia, two in Vietnam and one in Nepal.

The mayor of the Hubei province capital Wuhan, which has emerged as the epicentre of the epidemic outbreak, said he expects another 1,000 new patients in the city, official media reported.

There are signs showing the virus is becoming more transmissible. These walking contagious agents [hidden carriers] make controlling the outbreak a lot more difficult, he said.

Mayor Zhou Xianwang said "it was possible to add about 1,000 cases" based on the number of patients in hospital being tested or undergoing observation in the city.

A high power committee, formed to fight the coronavirus epidemic under the chairpersonship of Premier Li Keqiang, on Sunday said the virus' ability to spread was getting stronger and announced a slew of measures to combat it.

To curb the epidemic, China has decided to adopt a host of measures including delaying and reducing conferences and major

events, extending the current Spring Festival holidays and supporting online work.

To reduce population flows, the meeting decided on measures such as extending the Spring Festival holiday, which is scheduled between Jan 24 and 30, and delaying the start of the spring semester at colleges and schools.

It called for maximum efforts to reduce the mortality rate of patients and enhance their treatment.

More research will be conducted on cured patients and treatment measures will be further refined, with more training programmes scheduled for medical workers, an official statement said.

The Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Sunday said researchers have isolated viruses and were selecting a strain, Xu Wenbo, a director of CDC's virus institute said.

Xu told media that researchers had used high-throughput genetic sequencing to identify pathogens one day after the first four samples were sent from Wuhan on January 2.

China's National Health Commission on Sunday said the new coronavirus is contagious even in its incubation period, which lasts up to 14 days, and that the virus' ability to spread is getting stronger.

Palestinians Reiterate Rejection Of US 'Deal Of The Century'

Agencies

JERUSALEM- Palestinian factions have reiterated their rejection of the controversial US plan on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which is expected to be unveiled by President Donald Trump this week, calling for a "day of rage."

Palestinian Authority spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh stressed that the Palestinians would not allow the plan, which Trump calls the "deal of the century" to pass.

"The Palestinian leadership, with the support of our people, will defeat attempts to liquidate the Palestinian cause," Abu Rudeineh said Sunday.

"The leadership will hold a series of meetings on all levels — including the factions and

had rejected repeated requests from Trump to talk to him on the phone.

Ismail Haniyeh, the political leader of the Hamas resistance movement, also stressed that the deal is doomed to fail, warning of a "new phase" in the Palestinian struggle against the occupying regime.

"We firmly declare that the 'deal of the century' will not pass. The new plan aimed against Palestine is bound to fail," and could lead the Palestinians to a "new phase in their struggle" against Israel, Haniyeh said in a statement on Sunday.

Haniyeh also called for a meeting in the Egyptian capital with other Palestinian factions, including the Fatah movement, in order to form a common response to Trump's plan.



organizations — to announce its total rejection of conceding al-Quds," he added.

The spokesman also called on the Arab world to support the Palestinian stance, warning that Trump's plan would trigger turmoil in the region.

A Palestinian official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Monday that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas

Palestinian factions call for 'day of rage'

Palestinian factions on Sunday called for a "day of rage" in response to the controversial plan. Trump is expected to host Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his main political rival Benny Gantz at the White House on January 28 to unveil the so-called deal of the century.

Israel Formally Allows Citizens To Visit Saudi

Agencies

JERUSALEM: Israel on Sunday officially gave its citizens the right to travel to Saudi Arabia for religious and business visits, in the latest sign of warming ties between the two states.

The interior ministry's announcement will have limited



practical impact, as Israelis have been travelling to Saudi Arabia via third countries, especially Jordan. But Israel had never granted official approval for such travel by both Jewish and Muslim Israelis. Interior Minister Aryeh Deri "signed for the first time an order enabling an exit permit for Israelis to Saudi Arabia", his office said.

Israel has a peace deal with two Arab countries — Jordan and Egypt — but its occupation of Palestinian territories has long served as a major factor preventing similar accords with the rest of the Arab world.

The interior ministry said its move, coordinated with the security and diplomatic services, approves travel to Saudi Arabia "for religious purposes during Hajj and (for) Umrah".

It said Israel would also allow its citizens to travel to Saudi Arabia "to participate in business meetings or seek investments" for trips not exceeding 90 days.

Business travellers must have "arranged their entry to Saudi Arabia and received an invitation from a governmental source", the interior ministry said. There was no indication of a corresponding policy change from the Saudi side, but there have in recent months been gestures pointing to warming ties between Israel and Gulf states.

NEWSMAKERS

BAGHDAD- At least one person was wounded when three rockets hit the US embassy in Baghdad on Sunday, a senior Iraqi official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

One of the rockets hit an embassy cafeteria at dinner time, a security source told AFP, while two others landed nearby.

The US embassy did not respond to requests for comment and it was not immediately clear whether the injured person was an American national or an Iraqi staff member working at the mission.

The attack marked a dangerous escalation in the spree of rocket attacks in recent months that have targeted the embassy or Iraqi military bases where American troops are deployed.

None of the attacks has been claimed but Washington has repeatedly blamed Iran-backed military factions in Iraq.

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Three rockets hit US embassy in Iraqi capital Baghdad: Report



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working at the mission.

The attack took place earlier in the day than usual, with AFP reporters hearing the booms on the western bank of the river Tigris at precisely 7:30 pm (1630 GMT).

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel

Abdel Mahdi and Speaker of Parliament Mohammed Halbusi both condemned the incident, saying it risked dragging their homeland into war.

Iraq has already been dragged into a worrying tit-for-tat between the United States and Iran over the last month.

A similar attack on a northern Iraqi base killed an American contractor, and the US retaliated with a strike on an Iran-backed faction known as Kataeb Hezbollah.

Less than a week later, a US drone strike killed Iranian general Qasem Soleimani and Iraqi military figure Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis outside the Baghdad airport — prompting Iran to fire ballistic missiles at an Iraqi base where US troops are stationed.

‘Only for you, Iraq!’ -

Some 5,200 Americans are stationed in Iraq to lead the global coalition fighting the Islamic State group, but the US strike on Baghdad has rallied top Iraqi figures around a joint call to order them out.

UK to introduce new fast-track global talent visa for researchers, scientists

LONDON - The UK government announced that it will launch a global talent visa for scientists, researchers and mathematicians to come to the UK, with no limit on how many people can be accepted.

PM Boris Johnson has been criticised by opposition leaders for making the visa a commercial gimmick in light of Brexit, which is officially set to take place on January 31.

The Global Talent visa will be open from 20 February to those who work in a qualifying field and have been endorsed by a recognised UK body.

Boris Johnson said he wanted to emphasise "that the UK is open to the most talented minds in the world".

The PM said in his announcement that the UK "has a proud history of scientific discovery, but to lead the field and face the challenges of the future we need to continue to invest in talent and cutting-edge research".



"That is why as we leave the EU I want to send a message that the UK is open to the most talented minds in the world, and stand ready to support them to turn their ideas into reality," he said.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said the new plan is part of "decisive action" to maximise the number of world-class researchers given fast-tracked entry to Britain.

"Changing the name of a visa and removing a cap that's never been hit is not a serious plan," said Christine Jardine, home affairs spokesperson of the Liberal Democrats party.