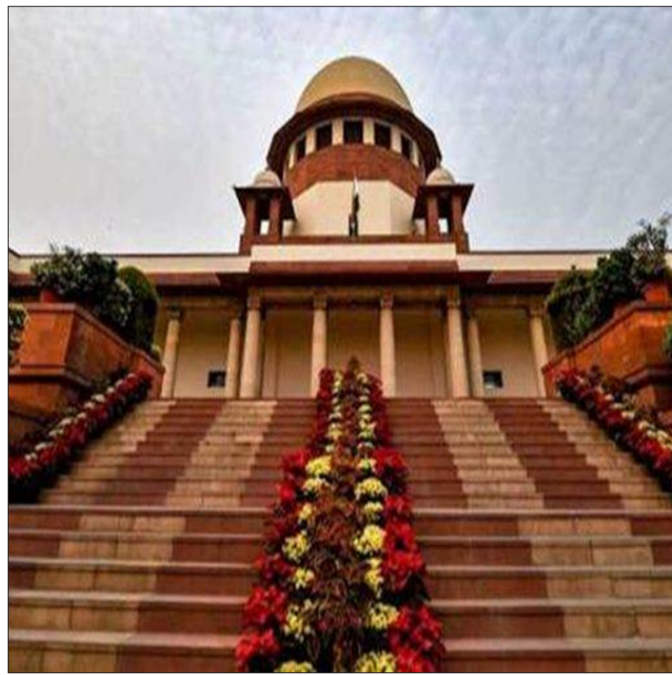


SC To Examine Victim And Society-Centric Guidelines In Death Penalty Cases



A week after the Centre moved an application in the Supreme Court, it agreed to examine the MHA request for 'victim-centric' guidelines in death penalty cases on Friday.

The Centre, on the backdrop of the 2012 Delhi gangrape case had moved an application in the Supreme Court observing that crime convicts are taking the "judicial process for a ride", sought to modify the "convict-centric" guidelines in death penalty cases and rather make them "victim-centric".

The government had asked the apex court to also introduce a seven-day deadline for death row convicts to file mercy petitions besides introducing a time limit for filing of review and curative petitions in such cases. The plea has said the apex court opined that the delay in execution of death penalty has got a "de-humanising effect" upon the death convicts.

The Centre had requested

the court to "mandate all the competent courts, state governments, prison authorities, to issue death sentence of a convict within seven days of the rejection of his mercy petition and to execute death sentence within seven days thereafter, irrespective of the stage of review petition/curative petition/mercy petition of his co-convicts".

A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde has sought response from various stakeholders on whose petition the guidelines relating to the execution of death row convicts were laid down in 2014 referring to the Shatrughan Chauhan case.

The issue of conviction and death sentence connected with the Shatrughan Chauhan case would not be altered while dealing with the Centre's plea, the bench further said. The Supreme Court issued notice to respondents who were named in the 2014 case.

Govt Responsible For Climate Of Hatred In Country: Tharoor



NEW DELHI: A day after a Jamia Millia Islamia student was injured in firing here, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on Friday expressed shock and held the NDA government responsible for "creating a climate of hatred" in the country.

"This government is responsible for creating a climate of hatred, wherein certain people feel they are empowered to fire at peaceful protesters. It is really shocking and very disappointing. Certainly, the police should take action," the Congress leader told reporters here.

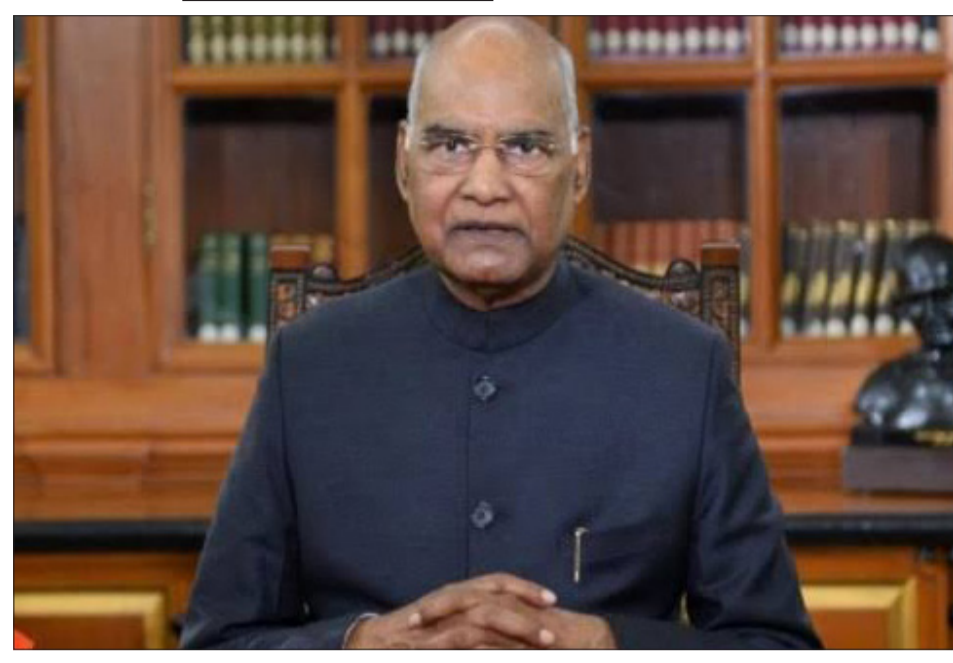
A young man was arrested for Thursday's shooting in the Jamia area in Delhi ahead of a student march from Jamia Millia Islamia to Rajghat.

Tharoor asserted that peaceful protests have been held in the country since the time of Mahatma Gandhi. "When the people are protesting, there

is no need to spread violence. Now, we have a shooting incident on the day of assassination of Mahatma Gandhi," he said to reporters after President Ram Nath Kovind's address to a joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament on the opening day of the Budget session.

The Congress leader also claimed that President Ram Nath Kovind's address was "disappointing" and that the NDA government was unable to fulfil its promises to the public.

"The President's speech was disappointing. He spoke about what the government wrote. The speech was full of fake promises. We all know that the government has not fulfilled any promise made to the people. And we are seeing that they are holding out the promise of achieving a 5-trillion dollar Indian economy," Tharoor added.



President Kovind Calls Citizenship Law "Historic"; slams Violence In Name Of Protests

NEW DELHI: Hailing the new Citizenship law as "historic" and a fulfilment of Mahatma Gandhi's wish, President Ram Nath Kovind on Friday deprecated any kind of violence in the name of protests, saying it weakened the society and the nation, remarks that came amid protests against the contentious law.

The President's glowing reference to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in his address to a joint sitting of Parliament drew protests from opposition members, many of whom wore black bands, with some shouting "shame shame" while BJP MPs thumped benches in support. The issue of atrocities against minorities in Pakistan was also brought up by the President.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi and the party's leader in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad sat in the back rows in the Central Hall of Parliament instead of the front seats allotted to them to mark their protest against the law.

Delivering his 70-minute ad-

dress in Hindi which marks the start of the Parliament's Budget session, Kovind pointed out that mutual discussions and debates strengthen democracy. He also called for making this decade "India's decade" and this century "India's century".

"At the same time, any kind of violence in the name of protests weakens the society and the nation," he said without directly referring to the anti-CAA protests in the country some of which have witnessed violence.

Kovind said India has always believed in the principle of equal respect for all faiths. But at the time of Partition, "this very belief of India and of its people came under the most severe attack."

He said Mahatma Gandhi had said that Hindus and Sikhs of Pakistan, who do not wish to live there, can come to India and it is the duty of the Indian government to ensure a normal life for them.

"It is our responsibility to honour this wish of the founding fathers of our nation. I am happy that both the Houses of Parliament have fulfilled this

wish, by enacting the Citizenship Amendment Act. At a time when the country is celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Gandhiji, all of you have given paramount consideration to this sentiment," Kovind said.

Referring to atrocities on minorities in Pakistan, the President said, "We have all seen what happened in Nankana Sahib recently. It is the responsibility of all of us to bring the atrocities being committed in Pakistan to the notice of the global community."

The Nankana Sahib gurdwara in Pakistan was attacked by a mob earlier this month.

"While condemning the atrocities on the minorities in Pakistan, I urge the world community to take cognizance of it and take necessary steps in this regard," he said.

On economic issues, Kovind exhorted people to use locally manufactured products for a "better tomorrow", as he reiterated the government's commitment to make India a USD 5 trillion economy.

Oppn Protest Over CAA During Presidential Address; TMC MPS Raise 'No-CAA' Banners

NEW DELHI: President Ram Nath Kovind on Friday delivered the Presidential address to the joint sitting of Parliament, outlining the government's policy, amid sloganeering and protest by opposition members against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

A section of opposition members, primarily from the Congress, wore black bands while others came with banners against the amended Citizenship act, a pan India National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the National Population Register (NPR).

Before the Presidential address which marks the commencement of the Budget Session, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla escorted Kovind to the Central Hall.

The address was in Hindi and lasted for nearly 70 minutes.

When Kovind read out excerpts related to abrogating provisions of Article 370 that gave Jammu and Kashmir a special status, many members applauded.

However, the longest applause was when he read out excerpts on the CAA. The ruling party members continued to thump the desk for nearly half-a minute.

At this point some opposition members raised "shame, shame" slogans.



As a mark of protest, opposition members including Congress President Sonia Gandhi and Ghulam Nabi Azad, the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, did not sit at their designated seats in the front row.

Instead, they sat in the fifth row along with party MPs Shashi Tharoor, Manish Tewari and Benny Behnan.

Several Congress MPs, including Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and Gaurav Gogoi, were seen sporting black bands as a mark of protest.

Seated in the front rows were External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Rajnath Singh, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Transport and Highways Minister Nitin

Gadkari, Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was seated along with Social Justice Minister Thawar Chand Gehlot while former prime minister Manmohan Singh was the only one from the opposition who was seated in the front row which is the norm.

When Congress leader and MP Rahul Gandhi came to the Central Hall, he passed by Shah, who was sitting in the front row but the two did not exchange pleasantries.

He took a seat in the fifth row in the same column along with Sonia Gandhi, Tharoor, Tewari, Azad and Behnan.

Delhi Court Stays Execution Of Nirbhaya Convicts



NEW DELHI: A Delhi court on Friday stayed till further orders the execution of the Nirbhaya gang-rape and murder convicts, which was earlier scheduled to take place on February 1.

Additional sessions judge Dharmender Rana had reserved the order in the matter earlier today.

During the hearing today, public prosecutor Irfan Ahmad said that convict Mukesh has no legal remedies available and the sentence on Mukesh should be executed.

Advocate AP Singh, appearing on behalf of the convicts, submitted that some legal remedies are still available for the convicts adding that Mukesh has been sincerely pursuing all legal remedies without delay.

On the other hand, Ahmad argued that the application moved by Vinay and Akshay is non-maintainable as per the Delhi Prison Rules but said that the execution of Vinay can be postponed.

Recently, Vinay Sharma had filed a mercy petition in the

matter. Advocate Seema Kushwaha, representing the victim's side, said that the convicts herein are adopting delay tactics to thwart the speed of justice.

Earlier today, Bihar jail authorities filed a status report in the matter and informed the court that the convicts can be hanged separately adding that convict Mukesh Singh has exhausted all the legal remedies available to him.

A Delhi court had earlier issued death warrants for the four convicts — Akshay Thakur, Mukesh Singh, Pawan Gupta, and Vinay Kumar Sharma — for their execution on February 1.

The case pertains to the gang-rape and brutalising of a 23-year-old paramedical student in a moving bus on the night of December 16, 2012, by six people including a juvenile in Delhi. The woman had died at a Singapore hospital a few days later.

One of the five adults accused, Ram Singh, had allegedly committed suicide in the Tihar Jail during the trial of the case.

Society Dangerously Inching Toward Civil War-Like Situation: Yechury



NEW DELHI: In a hard-hitting attack on the government over the new citizenship law, opposition parties on Friday held it responsible for the widespread unrest in the country following the legislation's enactment and said the society was dangerously inching toward a civil war-like situation.

The opposition parties are set to move amendments on President Ram Nath Kovind's address to both Houses of Parliament, seeking to remove his remarks on the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, sources said.

Speaking at a press briefing after Kovind's address, Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad said the government has lowered the prestige of president's office by

including the CAA in his address. "The society is dangerously inching toward a civil war-like situation and the government is solely responsible for it," CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said.

Azad said the government claiming development in Jammu and Kashmir after making it a Union Territory is a cruel joke with people there, and he demanded that the Centre should apologise.

He said it was shameful that the government claimed CAA to be an achievement and included it in president's address.

Kovind hailed the contentious CAA as "historic" in his address to the joint sitting of both Houses, prompting protests by some opposition members.

Lok Sabha Adjourned Till Saturday After Brief Meeting

NEW DELHI: The Lok Sabha was adjourned till Saturday 11 a.m. after a brief meeting on Friday, beginning the Budget session 2020.

Newly appointed MP from Ghosi Parliamentary Constituency in Uttar Pradesh, Atul Kumar Singh alias Atul Rai took oath and signed the roll of members in the Lok Sabha and took his seat soon after the House reassembled on Friday at 12.45 p.m.

Papers related to President Ram Nath Kovind's address to both houses of Parliament were laid followed by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman laying the Economic

Survey on the table of the House.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla then adjourned the House till 11 a.m. on Saturday, the day when Sitharaman will present the most expected Budget for the year 2020-2021 as the country has been passing through a crucial phase of economic slowdown.

This year's Budget session is divided into two parts. The first part began on Friday and will go on till February 11, after which the session will be adjourned for a short break. The second half of the session will be from March 2 to April 3.

Congress to hold meeting on February 4 to discuss NPR

NEW DELHI: The Congress on Friday said it will hold a meeting on February 4 of all party MPs and office bearers to formulate a strategy to oppose the National Population Register (NPR), whose updation is scheduled to begin in April.

A notice issued by Congress General Secretary K.C. Venugopal read: "A meeting of the AICC General Secretaries, in-charges and MPs of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha to brief about NPR on February 4."

The meeting would be held to apprise the leaders about the possible ramifications of the NPR. Congress ruled Rajasthan has already passed a resolution against the NPR in the assembly.



On the opening day of the budget session of Parliament on Friday, the Congress members attended the Presidential

address wearing black bands on their arms. They also protested at the Gandhi Statue and demanded roll back of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and raised slogans like "Save the Constitution".

The opposition also raised slogans when the President began speaking about the benefits of the CAA, mentioning the government had fulfilled the will of Mahatma Gandhi with the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019 in both the houses of Parliament.

The CAA came into force earlier this month after it was passed in the winter session of Parliament in December last year.

Iyc Files Police Complaint Against Anurag Thakur For His Inflammatory Speech

NEW DELHI: The Indian Youth Congress (IYC) on Friday lodged a police complaint against Union minister Anurag Thakur for his "inflammatory" speech during an election rally.

IYC president Srinivas B V claimed the complaint was lodged against Thakur at Parliament Street police station for his inflammatory speech after which a man fired at peaceful protestors at Jamia Millia Islamia on Thursday.

"We want immediate action against Thakur to prevent further escalation of such violent incidents in the country," Srinivas said.

A man fired a pistol at a group of anti-CAA protesters, injuring



a student near the JMI before walking away while waving the firearm over his head shouting "Yeh lo aazadi".

"The ideology which killed Gandhiji is still prevailing and people like Thakur are provoking the people," IYC national media in-charge Amrisha Ranjan Pandey said