

Milk, Vegetable Prices Up In Violence-Hit Northeast Delhi



Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI - Vegetable and milk prices in some pockets of the violence-hit northeast Delhi has gone up as shops remained shut amid a curfew-like situation in the region that witnessed at least 20 deaths in the last three days in clashes over the amended citizenship act.

Some shops which are opened are running out of supplies quickly and people in certain localities of Jafraabad, Maujpur, Baburpur, Noorilahi, Yamuna Vihar -- which have been the epicentre of the violence -- said they have to pay more for these essentials. The Delhi police had on Tuesday clamped restrictions on the gathering of four or more people under Section 144 of CrPC in a bid to check violent clashes which has also left more than 200 injured.

The restrictions have been able to check mobs running amok on main roads for two days, a Delhi police officer, on the ground, told PTI. But people in interiors of these localities are facing trouble in procuring essentials. The officer said situation would come to normal soon.

"I bought milk at Rs 50 a litre which usually costs us Rs 42 in this area. The shops in the lanes are closed and I had to walk 1 km to get it," Sulaiman, a resident of Jafraabad's Subhash Mohalla, told PTI.

He said some people were "lucky" to have stocked essential supplies, while others from the working class remained busy at work and could not do so.

Shakeel, a self-employed man, said vegetables in the area come from Ghazipur Mandi, but

the supplies have stopped in the last two days due to the prevailing situation.

"Vendors are not ready to come to this side because of the prevailing situation. The problem is more pronounced in the interior areas," he added.

Kamlesh, a housewife, said there was shortage of milk at homes in her neighbourhood, Maujpur, as local shops were closed.

"There are young kids who need milk. The family needs tea in the morning and this has been the story for two days now," she said.

Her son, a Class 6 student, chipped in with a chuckle. "We were served black tea (without milk)."

Another woman, also named Kamlesh, from the same neighbourhood, said, "Local shops are shut and some traders are selling vegetables from their homes but the prices are hugely inflated for items like potatoes and tomatoes."

The three were waiting along the road number 66 -- between Jafraabad and Maujpur-Baburpur metro stations -- for a conveyance to go to Shahdara.

A young man, unwilling to share his name, said he was out on the road to find vegetables and some other staples for home.

"It's difficult getting something here now," the man, a resident of Baburpur, said.

Another man, walking on the road with a bag filled with grocery items, said he had to go to Shahdara for the purchase.

Asked if products were costing higher than usual, he told PTI. "This is what happens in curfew. Milk and vegetable vendors are not getting into the interiors. We are managing it somehow."



Can't Say Repeatedly People Have Right To Protest But Without Blocking Roads: SC On Shaheen Bagh

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI - The Supreme Court on Wednesday said that it cannot say repeatedly that protesters at Shaheen Bagh in Delhi has the right to protest but they cannot block roads.

The top court said it had tried to find an out-of-the-box solution by appointing interlocutors to persuade the protesters looking at the prevailing conditions.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and K M Joseph said that though the court had thought of adopting an out-of-the-box solution but did not have any idea as to how far it had succeeded.

"We have already said in earlier hearings and cannot repeatedly say that the protesters do have the right to protest but they cannot block the roads," the bench said.

The top court remarks came after advocate Shashank Deo Sudhi, appearing for BJP leader Nand Kishore Garg, sought some interim order for removal of protesters from the road at Shaheen Bagh, saying people are using their right to protest as a weapon and causing inconvenience to others.

It added, "We have thought of something which was an out of box solution to the problem. However, we don't know how far we have succeeded but we must say that the interlocutors have made every endeavour to do whatever necessary to find the solution. We appreciate their efforts."

The bench said that it had gone through the report of the two interlocutors senior advocate Sanjay Hegde and advocate Sadhana Ramachandran.

It told the interlocutors that people at Shaheen Bagh have to come forward for the solution.

"Appointing of the interlocutors was an out-of-box solution. But let's see, how far we have succeeded," it added.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said that interlocutors were asked by the court to persuade the protesters to vacate the road, not to find alternatives to the blocked roads.

To this, the bench said, the court order was very clear in this regard.

"Their job was to instill confidence among the protesters that they have the right to protest but not at this place. We think they did their job well and we appreciate that," the bench said.

It asked all the parties to maintain composure, saying that "this is not how the developing society works and behaves. There can be difference of opinion. People may have their contra view which can be debated. There has to be a manner of debate."

The top court agreed with the views of Mehta that "manifestation of dissent should be civilized".

The solicitor general said that the observation of the court should not be put in the order as it may have a demoralising effect on the law enforcing agencies.

"We agree with that. The problem is that media people in the court starts tweeting about any word spoken in the court. By the time, order is dictated, it is spread all over. Many a times, what has been expressed in court is not part of the order. What we say in court is part of discussion, which we have. We must say that the views of the court is in its order," the bench said.

Mehta said that he was not referring to the media but the parties on other side, who may refer to the apex court's order in other judicial platforms.

Advocate Mehmood Pracha, appearing for some of the parties said that it is an open court and media can report the observation made during the proceedings.

The bench deferred the hearing of the matter for March 23.

The top court was hearing two pleas -- one by lawyer and petitioner Amit Sahni and another by BJP leader Nand Kishore Garg -- seeking removal of protesters from Shaheen Bagh, the epicentre of agitation against the Citizenship Amendment Act for over two months.

On Monday, the Supreme Court-appointed interlocutors had filed their report in a sealed cover in the apex court following their talks with protesters at Shaheen Bagh.

The court had on February 17 asked senior advocate Sanjay Hegde to "play a constructive role as an interlocutor" and talk to the protesters to move to an alternative site where no public place would be blocked.

It had said that Hegde along with advocate Sadhana Ramachandran or any other person of his choice may talk to the protesters.

Sahni, who had approached the Delhi High Court seeking directions to Delhi Police to ensure smooth traffic flow on the Kalindi Kunj-Shaheen Bagh stretch, which was blocked by anti-CAA protesters on December 15 last year.

While dealing with Sahni's plea, the high court had asked local authorities to deal with the situation keeping in mind law and order.

Separately, former BJP MLA Nand Kishore Garg has filed a plea in the apex court seeking directions to authorities to remove protesters from Shaheen Bagh.

Restrictions have been imposed on the Kalindi Kunj-Shaheen Bagh stretch and the Okhla underpass, which were closed on December 15 last year due to protests against CAA and National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Sonia Says Centre, Delhi Govt Responsible For Violence; Demands Shah's Resignation



Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI - Holding the Central and the Delhi governments responsible for the communal violence in the city that has left at least 20 dead, Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday demanded Home Minister Amit Shah's resignation as she addressed a rare press conference.

She spoke to the media after chairing a Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting, and alleged there was a "well-planned" conspiracy behind the violence, that has also led to injuries to more than 200 people over the past three days.

The CWC, the highest decision-making body of the Congress, deliberated on the issue and passed a resolution, demanding answers from both the governments, while also urging the people of Delhi to "reject the politics of hate and do their best in healing the rifts caused by these shameful events".

"After reviewing the situation, the CWC is of the firm opinion that what has happened in Delhi is a colossal failure of duty for which the entire responsibility must be borne by the Central Government and particularly the Home Minister and calls upon the Home Minister to tender his resignation immediately," said Gandhi, reading out the

CWC resolution.

She went on to attack the AAP dispensation, saying Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his government are "equally responsible for not activating the administration" to reach out to the people to maintain peace and harmony.

"It is the collective failure of the two governments that has resulted in a great tragedy in the capital city which threatens to become worse by the day," she read out from the CWC resolution.

The Congress had also planned to march to the Rashtrapati Bhavan after the meeting to hand over a memorandum to President Ram Nath Kovind over the issue, but they postponed it as the President gave them time for a meeting on Thursday.

But, the Delhi Congress will be taking out a peace march from the party headquarters later in the day with many AICC leaders in attendance.

The Congress president also hit out at BJP leader Kapil Mishra for making a statement that allegedly incited the violence in the city.

"The conspiracy was witnessed during Delhi polls and BJP leaders gave hate speeches creating an atmosphere of fear and hatred. On Sunday, a BJP leader has given inflammatory speech by giving a three-day ultimatum to Delhi Police," she said.

Sonia 'Politicising' Violence, Demand For Shah's Resignation Laughable: BJP

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI - The BJP Wednesday hit back at the Congress and Sonia Gandhi for holding the Centre responsible for the violence in Delhi, saying "those whose hands are tainted with the bloods of innocent Sikhs are now talking about checking violence".

The BJP's attack came after Congress chief Sonia Gandhi addressed a press conference here in which she held the Centre and the Delhi government responsible for the violence and demanded Home Minister Amit Shah's resignation.

Senior BJP leader and Union Minister Prakash Javadekar said that Shah was continuously working with the police to control the situation in the national capital and demanding his resignation was "laughable".

"The Home Minister is continuously working with the police, helping their morale and directing them. Such comments and politics from the Congress will not help the morale of the police. We appeal to them to not do politics on the issue," Javadekar told a press conference.

He further said Shah had called a meeting of all political parties including the Congress over the communal violence in Delhi -- and asserted it is the responsibility of all

parties to help maintain peace.

Javadekar said all parties should cooperate and work for peace at a time when violence is abating, notwithstanding the ongoing investigation.

"Playing a blame-game at this time is wrong. Politicising such violence is a wrong way always used by the Congress," he said, while asserting that culprits will be identified and no one responsible will be spared.

"At such a time, attacking the government and politicising violence is a dirty politics," he said, adding that it also demoralizes police.

He also raked up the 1984 anti-Sikh riots when the Congress was in power to hit back at the opposition party.

"Those whose hands are tainted with the bloods of innocent Sikhs in 1984 are now talking about checking the violence... they themselves had supported the violence," Javadekar alleged.

BJP National Secretary Y Satya Kumar also tweeted, "Who incited 1984 riots, where 4000 innocent Sikhs were killed? You remember those infamous words 'Jab badaa ped girta hai to dharti thodi hilti hai. How about some introspection?"

Javadekar, however, parried questions about the "provocative" statements made by BJP leader Kapil Mishra which allegedly led to the escalation of violence in the national capital.

Maha Council Clears Bill To Make Marathi Compulsory In Schools



Press Trust Of India

MUMBAI - The Maharashtra Legislative Council on Wednesday unanimously approved a bill that makes Marathi learning and teaching compulsory in schools in the state with a provision for penalty in case of non-compliance.

The Maharashtra Compulsory Teaching and Learning of Marathi Language in Schools Bill, 2020, was passed unanimously in the Upper House and it will be tabled in the Legislative Assembly on Thursday.

A bill is generally introduced and approved in the Assembly first and then it goes to the Council. However, in this case, the Council chairman allowed the minister concerned to introduce the bill in the Upper House first.

According to the legislation,

schools found in non-compliance with the provisions of the bill would attract penalty of up to Rs 1 lakh.

The bill covers all schools irrespective of boards they are affiliated to.

Speaking in the house, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray expressed happiness over the passage of the bill in the Council.

I will also pursue with the Centre the matter of granting classical language status to Marathi. I am happy that we are clearing the bill," he said.

Council Chairman Ramraje Naik Nimbalkar said, As per legislative procedures, a bill is generally cleared in the assembly and then tabled in the Council.

"But as an exception, I am allowing Subhash Desai, Minister for Marathi Language, to table the bill (in the Upper House).

Samajwadi Party MP Azam Khan, Wife, Son Sent To Judicial Custody

Press Trust Of India

LUCKNOW - Samajwadi Party MP Azam Khan, his legislator wife Tanzin Fatima and MLA son Abdullah Azam were on Wednesday sent to judicial custody for allegedly faking Abdullah's birth certificate.

They have been sent to judicial custody till March 2," Rampur Superintendent of Police Santosh Kumar Mishra told PTI.

The case relates to a forged birth certificate for Azam's son Abdullah, who allegedly gave a wrong date of birth while filing

his nomination papers for the assembly elections.

The SP indirectly blamed the ruling BJP for the case against Azam Khan, suggesting that it was vendetta.

The Samajwadi Party doesn't consider any action taken in revenge appropriate. Governments can't run on bias, the party tweeted in Hindi.

"The Samajwadi Party also trusts the judicial process. We have faith in court, we will get justice, it added.

The Bharatiya Janata Party welcomed the development. "Azam Khan did politics for



himself only. It was for the exploitation of the poor. We welcome the decision of the court to send him to the jail, BJP spokesperson Chandra Mohan said.

He said SP chief Akhilesh Yadav should give an explanation on the kind of people associated with him in politics.

NEWS MAKERS

Union Cabinet okays Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI - The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill after incorporating recommendations of a Rajya Sabha Select Committee.

"Surrogacy Regulation Bill incorporating recommendations of RS Select Committee has been approved by the Cabinet," Union Minister Prakash Javadekar said at a press conference.

A parliamentary panel had recommended that not only close relatives but any woman who is "willing" should be allowed to act as a surrogate.

The 15 major changes sug-



gested by the 23-member select committee of Rajya Sabha to the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019, also included deleting the definition of "infertili-

ty" as the inability to conceive after five years of unprotected intercourse on the ground that it was too long a period for a couple to wait for a child.

Rejection of Savarkar resolution: BJP slams Shiv Sena

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MUMBAI - With the Maharashtra Assembly Speaker on Wednesday rejecting the BJP's demand for a government resolution honouring Hindutva icon V D Savarkar, senior leader Devendra Fadnavis launched a frontal attack on the Shiv Sena, calling it "laachar" (helpless) for power.

The BJP had demanded the resolution commemorating the death anniversary of Savarkar on Wednesday.

"The BJP also wanted ban on Congress magazine 'Shidori' for terming Savarkar as a 'maf-iveer' (mercy-seeker) and not 'Swantrayaveer' (freedom fight-

er)", Fadnavis said. The magazine had also published objectionable content, saying Savarkar was punished for rape, the Leader of Opposition in the Assembly said.

Earlier, Fadnavis tore a copy of the magazine in the Lower House. "Unfortunately, I have never seen such a 'laachar' Shiv Sena before this," Fadnavis told reporters outside the state legislature building, after the resolution was rejected.

He recalled how late Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray had hit with shoes the banner (carrying image) of Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar for insulting Savarkar. The Shiv Sena in August 2004

launched "Jode Mara" (hit with footwear) agitation to condemn Aiyar and the Congress after his purported act of removing the plaque containing Savarkar's quotes at the Cellular Jail in Andaman triggered a controversy.

Bal Thackeray himself had kick-started the agitation by hitting the effigy of Aiyar, then Shree Chandra Mohan said.

"But his son, Uddhav Thackeray who is chief minister now, is sitting next to those whose mouthpiece called Savarkar a rapist," Fadnavis said.

The Shiv Sena, led by Uddhav Thackeray, shares power in Ma-

harashtra with the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress.

Fadnavis further said Maharashtra will not tolerate insult of Savarkar, and that the BJP will raise the issue with the people.

He and another senior BJP leader Sudhir Mungantiwar also raised the photo frame of Savarkar hailing the Hindutva leader.

A Congress affiliate in Madhya Pradesh had last month distributed a Hindi booklet, titled "Veer Savarkar, Kitne 'Veer'?", which had some controversial references regarding Savarkar and Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse.