

Mumbai Tense As Protest Rally Axed

FIRS Filed Against Activists Jignesh Mewani And Umar Khalid Of JNU

MUMBAI: After Wednesday's violence-hit 'Maharashtra Shutdown', police on Thursday abruptly axed permission to a day-long student convention in which Gujarat legislator Jignesh Mewani and JNU student leader Umar Khalid were to take part.

Simultaneously, Pune Police registered a FIR against the two leaders for allegedly making inflammatory speeches at a meeting in Shaniwarwada in Pune on December 31.

Mumbai Police swooped on the Bhaidas Hall, in the posh western suburb of Vile Parle on Thursday morning, and stopped the Left-leaning Chhatra Bharati's All India Students Summit which was scheduled to be addressed by Khalid and Mewani.

Considered the Dalit face of Gujarat politics and convenor of Rashtriya Dalit Adhikar Manch, Mewani was elected to the state Assembly last month as an Independent.

The police broke up the planned convention, citing prohibitory orders imposed in Mumbai after Wednesday's state-wide shutdown which left a 16-year old student dead in Nanded.

Opposing the police move, Chhatra Bharati members staged



Police detains Allahabad University student leader Richa Singh outside the Bhaidas Hall in Mumbai's Vile Parle on Jan 4, 2018

noisy protests, raised anti-government slogans and attempted to squat outside the venue. Many were seen running on to the main road outside.

Defying the police, some attempted to enter the auditorium but were evicted by the police. Chhatra Bharati Vice President Sagar Bhalerao said the day-long event was planned long ago in which both Mewani, Khalid and others were listed speakers.

Maharashtra legislator Kapil Patil said around 800 students and delegates including many girls were dumped into police

vans and taken to various police stations where they were detained for several hours.

"The police are acting at the behest of the BJP-Shiv Sena government to crush the voice of the students who raise uncomfortable questions. This is a fascist government," Patil told the media.

Demanding the release of the detained students, scores of students squatted outside the Juhu police station raising anti-government slogans.

In Pune, the police late on Wednesday booked Mewani and Khalid for 'inciting passions' be-

tween communities following a complaint by a Pune-based student, Akshay G. Bikkad.

Bikkad said that at a meeting held on December 31, Mewani and Khalid made allegedly inflammatory speeches that could create misunderstanding between communities. The complainant said that such inflammatory speeches can create a wedge and enmity between communities. Miscreants attacked the Victory Pillar (Vijay Stambh) in Koregaon-Bhima resulting in riots and created arson on January 1, he said.

The developments came in the wake of the series of disturbances in Maharashtra starting with the desecration of a monument in Vadhu Budruk on December 29, followed by the riots in Koregaon-Bhima that left one dead on January 1, and the 'Maharashtra Shutdown' that killed one minor boy and left a trail of destruction.

Violence Spreads To MP, Buses Burnt

BURHANPUR (MP): Caste violence of Maharashtra spread on Thursday to neighbouring Madhya Pradesh where more than 10 buses and other vehicles were set ablaze during a bandh called by two Dalit organisations, police said.

The vandalism and arson was reported from Burhanpur district in the state where two organisations were taking out rallies during the bandh called to protest against the attacks on Dalits in Maharashtra. The police later arrested eight of the protesters. Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Rakesh Sagar said some protesters vandalised the buses and other vehicles and then set those on fire.

'I Have Not Been Tortured' - Jadhav

New Video Is 'Propagandic Exercise With No Credibility' Declares India

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday released a video in which alleged Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav claimed he was not tortured in custody and accused an Indian diplomat of "yelling" at his mother and wife after they met him last month.

India dismissed the recorded statement as a "propagandistic exercise" with no credibility.

Sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017, Jadhav, 47, says in the short video clip that he had "not been subjected to any sort of torture in Pakistan".

He also thanked the Pakistan government for letting him meet his mother Avantika and wife Chetankul in Islamabad on December 25. "This gesture was a

positive one... I feel happy."

India's External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar accused Pakistan of "simply continuing its practice of putting out coerced statements on video.

"It is time for them to realise that such propagandistic exercises simply carry no credibility.

"The absurdity of a captive under duress certifying his own welfare while mouthing allegations of his captors clearly merits no comment."

Kumar added: "Pakistan is best advised to fulfil its international obligations, whether it pertains to consular relations or UNSC resolutions 1267 and 1373 on terrorism and to desist from continuing violations of human rights of an Indian national."



Islamabad: The mother and wife of Mumbai-based former naval officer-turned-businessman Kulbhushan Jadhav meet him at the Pakistan Foreign Office in Islamabad on Dec 25, 2017

The death row convict is heard saying in the video released by the Pakistan Foreign Office: "The Indian person or diplomat ac-

companying my mother and wife started yelling at them as soon as they stepped out of the meeting."

Pakistani authorities arranged the meeting between Jadhav and his family through a glass panel but did not allow a private discussion. Indian Deputy High Commissioner J.P. Singh was not seated with the family.

Jadhav says in the video that he "saw fear" in the eyes of his mother and wife when they met him -- for the first time after his controversial arrest.

"I saw fear... why should there be fear? What all has happened has happened," Jadhav said, add-

ing his family was "threatened".

"I am a Commissioned officer in the Indian Navy - my Commission is not over," he said.

On December 26, India denounced Pakistan for its handling of the family's visit, saying the two women were harassed and prevented from talking to Jadhav freely.

New Delhi denies Jadhav is a spy and says he was abducted from Iran where he had business interests. Islamabad claims he was arrested in the restive province of Balochistan and that he had been tasked by New Delhi to promote terrorism in Pakistan.

US Places Pakistan On List For Violations Of Religious Freedom

WASHINGTON: The US State Department on Thursday placed Pakistan on a Special Watch List for severe violations of religious freedom.

The US State Department in a statement said the Secretary of State on December 22, 2017 re-designated Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as Countries of Particular Concern.

The Secretary also placed Pakistan on a Special Watch List for "severe violations of religious freedom".

"In far too many places around the globe, people continue to be persecuted, unjustly prosecuted, or imprisoned for exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief. Today, a number of gov-

ernments infringe upon individuals' ability to adopt, change, or renounce their religion or belief, worship in accordance with their religion or beliefs, or be free from coercion to practice a particular religion or belief," it said.

The protection of religious freedom is vital to peace, stability, and prosperity. These designations are aimed at improving the respect for religious freedom in these countries, the statement said. "We believe that the protection of religious freedom is vital to peace, stability, and prosperity. So in accordance with legislation, the State Department annually designates governments that have engaged in or tolerated systematic, ongoing," State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert said.

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