

Akhtar faces flak for Deoband views

Mohammed Wajihuddin | TNN

Mumbai: A group of clerics have trained their guns on noted poet-lyricist Javed Akhtar for his allegedly anti-Deoband fatwa comments. Addressing the media at the press club on Friday, the maulvis said that since Akhtar was not an authority on Islam, he should not comment on Islamic affairs.

Javed Akhtar had strongly opposed the Darul Uloom Deoband's fatwa, which called women's earnings *haram* (forbidden) and asked them not to work with men.

On a news channel, he had apparently called the muftis (those who issued fatwas) "mad and insane".

"Akhtar may be a good poet, lyricist and scriptwriter. He is not an authority on Islam and has no right to insult ulema (Muslim scholars) and muftis. He must apologise for his outrageous comments against our revered clerics," said Maulana Mehmood Daryabadi, general secretary, All India Ulema Council. "We are pained and hurt by his utterances."

Daryabadi also defended Darul Uloom Deoband and said that the institution had clarified that it never issued a fatwa asking women not to work outside their homes. "A fatwa is issued in a given question and it should be seen in that context alone," he said.

The clerics also attacked the media, which often approaches individuals such as Javed Akhtar for comments on Muslim affairs.

"Akhtar is a communist, but he never loses an opportunity to speak about Muslims and Islam. Just like you don't approach an electronic engineer if you want to know about civil engineering, I ask you not to consult a known anti-Muslim like Javed Akhtar for comments on Islamic matters," said Maulana Mustaqeem Azmi, general secretary of Jamiatul Ulema-e-Hind, an organisation of nationalist clerics formed in pre-independence era.

This is not the first time that Akhtar has come in the line of fire of clerics for his free, frank and liberal views. When contacted, he said he would react to the maulvis' latest salvo latter.

Akhtar may be a good poet, lyricist and scriptwriter. He is not an authority on Islam and has no right to insult ulema (Muslim scholars) and muftis

Maulana Mehmood Daryabadi | GENERAL SECRETARY, ALL INDIA ULEMA COUNCIL

Muslim bodies plan campaign against fatwa

S Balakrishnan | TNN

Mumbai: A national campaign will be launched against the fatwa issued recently by the Darul-Uloom, Deoband, which prohibits Muslims from celebrating Eid Miladun Nabi or the Prophet's birthday. In a statement issued here at a press conference on Friday, Maulana Mansoor Ali of the All India Sunni Jamiatul Ulema and Mohammed Saeed Noorie of the Raza Academy said this fatwa has been rejected outright by the Muslim masses.

They alleged that the Darul-Uloom, the Wahhabis and the Ahle Hadees have been asking Muslims not to celebrate his birthday. "These sects are free to stay away from the celebrations of the birthday. But they cannot impose their views on the rest of the community," Noorie stated.

Maulana Mansoor Ali said the fatwa has created a "major uproar" in the entire community. He said there was a regular move by the heretics to undermine the beliefs of the Ahle Sunnat whose followers were in a majority.

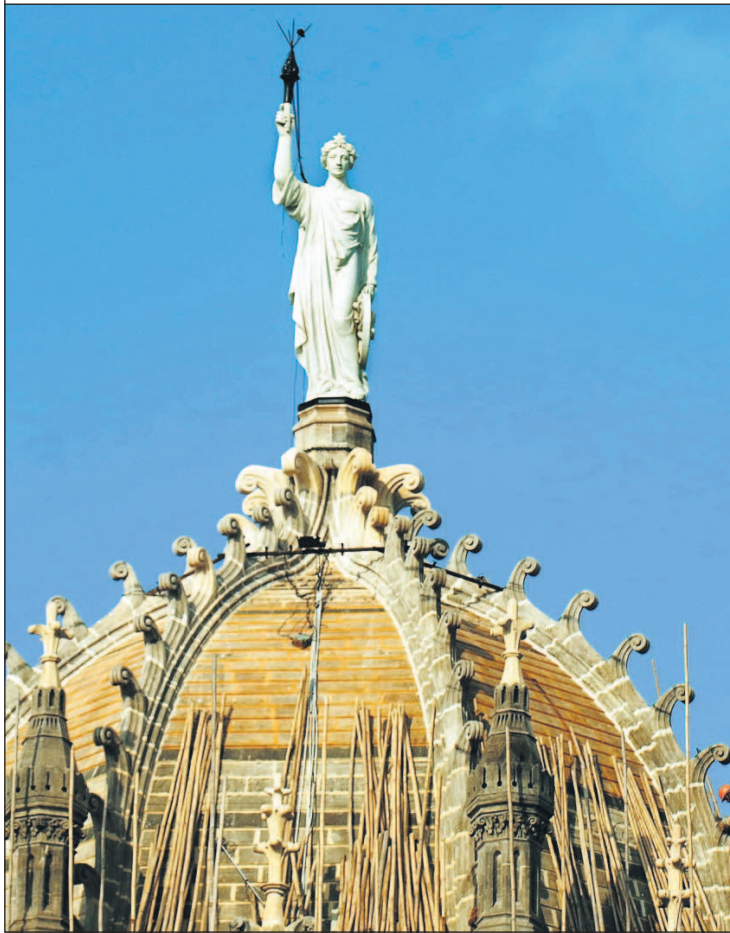
Just a few weeks ago, a Wahhabi Maulana Meraj Rabbani attacked the sacredness of Sufi saint Hazrat Khwaja Garib Nawaz, Ajmer. "We have in our possession a CD of his talk in which he exhorts his followers to destroy the holy dargahs," Noorie said.

"If Deobandis are adamant on this fatwa, we from the Ahle Sunnat are ready for a debate in which we shall prove that it is not only allowed, but it's a great reward to celebrate Eid e Miladun Nabi," they added.

All India Sunni Jamiatul Ulema, Raza Academy and other prominent sunni organisations have started chalking out programmes to challenge these "corrupt beliefs" of these sects. "We demand the immediate withdrawal of this fatwa or else we shall expose the corrupt beliefs they have been propagating," Noorie added. Farid Batawala of the Bombay Aman Committee also denounced the fatwa and called for its immediate withdrawal.

CST STATUE GETS A FACELIFT

Prashant Nakwe



GLORIOUS VISION: The freshly scrubbed statue of progress atop the CST station, which was under wraps for restoration work, is back in public view

New SC bench will hear forest land case

Somit Sen | TNN

Mumbai: The Supreme Court will set up a new bench to hear the Mumbai forest land case. Newly appointed Chief Justice of India Sarosh Homi Kapadia on Friday recused himself from hearing the forest land matter, stating that he was a former employee of Nanabhoy Jeejeebhoy—a construction firm which is enlisted as one of the petitioners in the case. "Since I have previously worked in this company, I will not be hearing the case," he told lawyers representing the petitioners.

Justice Swatanter Kumar, who is also on the SC bench, had heard the forest land case in 2008 when he was heading a division bench of the Bombay high court. He had then rejected the petition of builders and residents, and given a verdict in favour of Maharashtra government by declaring nearly 1,000 acres of land in Mulund, Nahur, Thane, Borivli and Kandivli as "forests". He too has recused himself from the case, thereby paving way for a new bench.

A lawyer told TOI, "The bench will be constituted in the first week of July. Besides, the CJI has also separated the Godrej group case from the petition of residents and builders." It will be heard separately after the vacation.

Petitioner Prakash Padikkal said that the Godrej case, which involved dereliction of several acres of land in Vikhroli area, was purely a CRZ case and had to be delinked with the forest land case. "We now have nearly two months for the next hearing. The state government should expedite the process of submitting list of those who paid the net present value (NPV) in Mulund and Nahur areas to the ministry of environment & forests," he said.

He stated that the state cannot delay the submissions for "lack of translators." The TOI had reported on Friday how the state faced a mammoth task of translating several property documents from Marathi to English and this was the reason why it had delayed in submitting the NPV list to MOE&F.

Chavan to look into Bagwe case

Mumbai: The Congress on Friday asked chief minister Ashok Chavan to ascertain the veracity of 19 serious offences registered against Maharashtra minister of state for home Ramesh Bagwe in Pune, which also led authorities to put on hold his passport's renewal.

A senior police official in Pune has said there were 19 criminal cases registered against Bagwe, out of which 15 are cognisable and four non-cognisable.

After surfacing of the reports, the Congress leadership has asked Chavan to inquire into the matter and submit a report on the same.

"The party has taken cognisance of the issue and has asked Maharashtra chief minister Ashok Chavan to enquire into the matter and submit a report," a senior Congress leader said.

Authorities at Pune passport office have indicated that Bagwe's passport renewal application could be processed if he submits a copy of the court order stating that he has been absolved from the pending cases. Agencies

15-yr-old boy rapes girl at Ghatkopar

Mayank Soni | TNN

Mumbai: Officials of Ghatkopar police station have arrested a teenager for allegedly raping a 10-year-old girl at the Tekripada slum in Ghatkopar West.

According to the police, the 15-year-old accused works in a general store in the area. The incident happened on Thursday afternoon when the girl had gone to the store to buy biscuits.

A police officer said, "The accused took her to a deserted spot behind the store and raped her. He threatened to harm her if she spoke about the incident."

The terrified girl ran home, but did not reveal anything. She kept crying uncontrollably and only said that she was bleeding and in pain. Her mother took her to the doctor, who confirmed that she had been raped.

Kurla-Thane stretch will get two more lines

Roana Maria Costa | TNN

Mumbai: If Central Railway (CR) officials are to be believed, almost a decade after work to lay additional lines between Kurla and Thane began, it will be finally completed over the next three months.

Even better, this would translate in the introduction of new services and improved punctuality on the mainline. CR officials, though, are quick to add a disclaimer: All this is subject to the availability of new rakes. Rakes would be given on a priority basis to the DC-AC converted sections, to replace old rakes, increase 12-car services and augment nine- to 12-car services between Thane and Panvel.

Senior CR officials told TOI that the work, which will be carried out in two phases, was approved in 1995-1996 (the 10-km Kurla-Bandup stretch) and 1997-98 (the 7-km Bandup-Thane stretch). The work started a year later on land that was not encroached upon. A total of 121 legal tenements were also rehabilitated by the MMRDA.

K K Sharma, chief administrative officer (construction), CR, told TOI that the project's completion is subject to traffic blocks. "Work to lay the fifth and sixth lines has been completed along the entire stretch, except at Vidya Vihar: Points and crossings also need to be inserted," he said. He added that although the project was approved more than a decade ago, work in "right earnest" started only a year and a half ago after the encroachments were shifted out.

Convocation over, but no certificates

Hemali Chhapia | TNN

Mumbai: More than a month ago, the University of Mumbai promised all its graduates that they would receive their convocation certificates by the first week of May. Half way into the month, though, thousands of graduates are yet to lay their hands on their certificates. Many of them who wish to pursue higher studies or apply for jobs are waiting for their arrival.

This is the first year that the university has decided against giving out certificates on the convocation day; instead, it informed graduates that they could collect the same from their individual colleges. The university had said that certificates would reach colleges within a week of the convocation.

Representatives of the Maharashtra Navmirman Vidarthi Sena met university officials regarding the issue, and they were assured that the distribution work would be hastened.

University insiders, though, suspect the certificates never reached the university on time. Their doubts are not baseless. According to Subhash Athwale, a former senate member, the university selected a printing press — Manipal Press — that had been blacklisted earlier by the SNTD University for late delivery of marksheets. "This contract with this press from Manipal was discontinued by SNTD



Extra WR tracks have meant better service

The third and fourth line between Borivli and Virar was started on July 7, 2007. Soon afterwards, 20 new locals were started. Currently, on an average, 90 mail and express trains, including holiday specials and 94 suburban trains, use this path daily. While on all four lines, 417 locals are run, including the 12- and 15-car services. The rest of the services are 12 cars. The extra lines have led to more punctuality and increased and faster services.

Sources said that the work would need around two months after permissions are granted, which they said, they expect in a month's time. "The lines should be ready by August-end."

S C Mudgerikar, chief PRO, CR, said work to link the tracks to LTT and Vidyavihar would be done only after summer as special trains scheduled would get affected. Services could be started only after October after all the safety tests were conducted.



University because it did not deliver their convocation certificates on time. I am shocked that Chandra Krishnamurthy, the acting vice chancellor (and SNTD's VC), never pointed out the inefficiencies of this printing press, and went ahead and awarded the contract for the Mumbai University's convocation certificates to the same press."

When TOI contacted Vilas Shinde, the controller of examinations, he said that he had already dispatched the mark sheets of various courses. "But I do acknowledge that there is more work to be done. We need to dispatch the mark sheets of several other courses." To date, the university has already sent the convocation certificates to all engineering students and LLB graduates as many of them fly abroad for further studies. "We have also dispatched the mark sheets and certificates for all MSc and BSc and BSc (IT) students as well as those who cleared their BE and ME. But there has been a lot of pressure among the staff which has been busy conducting exams," said Shinde.

Cyber sleuths will alert common man

Mateen Hafeez | TNN

Mumbai: After a three-year break, the city police and Nasscom have organised a Cyber Safety Week from May 24 to May 28. During this period, sleuths from the cyber crime investigation cell (CCIC) will visit

discussions amongst doctores, professionals and police men, use of technology in data mining, analysis and integration for use in financial fraud investigation, interactive kiosks, what Mumbai thinks of cyber crime, cyber safety for social and corporate citizens, cyber terrorism, e-commerce security for travel industry and so on. These programmes will be organised at the Bombay Stock Exchange, police gymkhana, housing societies, various malls, Azad Maidan police hall, Welingkar's Institute of Management and Y B Chavan auditorium.

Vijay Mukhi of Nasscom said, "Our target is reaching out to the younger generation and informing them about the do's and don'ts of computers."

Police commissioner D Sivanandhan on Friday stated that the programme began in 2003 and continued till 2006, but after a break of three years, the police was ready to celebrate cyber safety week this month. "The terror organisation, Indian Mujahideen, on two occasions used the unsecured WiFi network and sent terror emails. Our intention is to make the net users about the misuse of such equipments. Our personnel will conduct lec-



SOMETIMES, WATER IS THICKER THAN BLOOD.

Water, it can be argued, links India and Pakistan more than even blood.

The eternal source of all life, it flows through rivers linking two civilizations, two nations and lately, two enemies as well. And even as the many huge dam and canal projects on these rivers stand as proud symbols of our new economic progress, the fact is, they control the destinies of millions in Pakistan. Worse, even as we head towards our own water reserve crisis, Pakistan faces a dire socio-economic crisis inching towards an annual 'water stress' limit of 1000 cubic metres per person.

This is no longer about political gains but human morality. We don't manufacture water, nor does Pakistan. It is therefore only more humane to put man-made differences aside and cherish nature's blessings as fairly as we can. The water conflict and other hard issues are some of the answers that Aman Ki Asha's CONFRONTING HURDLES seeks to answer. With a renewed push for both nations to start talking about the larger conflicts that fester within our hearts. And call on our leaders, who have already started talking, to find lasting solutions. Before water turns to blood.

aman ki asha
THE FIRST STEP