



Revellers participate in a carnival celebration in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago —REUTERS

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Gurmehar pulls out of anti-ABVP march

DCW asks Facebook to deactivate accounts threatening her

NEW DELHI, FEB 28 /-/ DU student Gurmehar Kaur today pulled out of a protest march against ABVP, requesting to be "left alone", and left for Jalandhar to be with her family. Kaur's decision comes amidst a raging controversy over her social media campaign against RSS-backed ABVP, which attracted alleged threats of rape and a virulent backlash, with even Union ministers joining the fray. In a series of tweets, Kaur, a Lady Sri Ram College student, announced her decision saying she has been through a lot and "this is all my 20 year self could take (sic)". The martyr's daughter earlier begged people not to identify her as a "martyr's daughter" if that "bothers" them. She is the daughter of Capt Mandeeep Singh who was killed in a militant attack in Jammu and Kashmir in 1999. "She has left for Jalandhar to be with her family," a Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) official said.

The Delhi Police has requested their Jalandhar counterpart to provide adequate security to her. As the march, from which she withdrew, made its way through the North Campus with hundreds of students of JNU, DU and Jamia, she tweeted: "All my friends. Our lovely faculty! how I wish I was there. In an earlier tweet, she had urged people to join the march, which is "about students and not about me", in large numbers. "I'm withdrawing from the campaign. Congratulations everyone. I request to be left alone. I said what I had to say. I have been through a lot and this is all my 20 year self could take. To anyone questioning my courage and bravery, I've shown more than enough," she said. The Lady Sri Ram College

backed Kaur saying she has the right to express her opinion. "We support our student as duty of institutions is to nurture students without fear. Gurmehar has right to express her opinion and she responded sensitively, bravely. She has fulfilled her duty as a young citizen," the college said in a statement. The 20-year-old student had started the campaign "I am not afraid of ABVP", following the February-22 violence at Ramjas College. The campaign went viral and received a massive support from students of various universities. Kaur had on Monday met DCW chief Swati Maliwal and complained that she has been receiving "rape threats" on social media, allegedly by ABVP members. Maliwal, who

termed the threats as "shameful", has written to Police Commissioner Amulya Patnaik demanding an FIR be registered against the "abusers" and security be provided to her and her family. Meanwhile, the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) today asked Facebook to deactivate the accounts which were used to allegedly issue "rape threats" to DU student Gurmehar Kaur. The DCW wrote to Delhi Police demanding security for her and her family and lodging of an FIR. The Delhi Police today registered an FIR against unknown persons in connection with the case. DCW chief Swati Maliwal in the letter said that Kaur has been subjected to "extreme abuse and rape threats" on her Facebook profile. "We are in the receipt of a complaint from her which is self-explanatory and contains relevant screenshots of rape threats and abuse as evidence. The same is being forwarded to you for your perusal and necessary action," she wrote.



Wakf Board turns battleground between Sultan Ahmed and Imam Barkati

Shahi Imam calls TMC MP an RSS agent while Ahmed says govt will be apprised of situation

SABYASACHI BANDOOPADHYAY

KOLKATA, FEB 28 /-/ It's Trinamool Congress versus Trinamool Congress at the state's Wakf Board. The board, a body that controls and manages wakf property, which has long been rocked by allegations of corruption—the CID of the state police has been looking into some of them for almost the past five years—has now been witness to a fierce feud between two prominent members of the Board, party MP Sultan Ahmed and Shahi Imam of Tipu Sultan Mosque Nur Ur Rehman Barkati, both of whom are very close to chief minister Mamata Banerjee.



"I have come here to cleanse the Board of beimans (traitors), those who are inimical to the interests of Muslims. I have got the mandate of Didai. Sultan is an agent of RSS, the BJP. All those who are against Islam will be eradicated" — Imam Barkati

Things took an ugly turn on February 22 at the first board meeting of the year when Barkati called Ahmed "a thief, a dacoit and a middleman". And at the meeting of the board next day where Ahmed was not present, the Imam threw water bottles at Afazuzamman Khan, another member and a close confidant of Ahmed who flew in rage when Afazuzamman Khan, a close follower of Ahmed wanted to know about a Wakf property given by philanthropists to be used for religious or charitable purposes. Barkati threw water bottles at Khan twice making other members stunned and speechless. Interestingly Ahmed, a former minister of state in the earlier UPA government has got with him the support of members owing allegiance to the Opposition like the Congress. "The kind of language Barkati used at the meeting...we started wondering how an Imam could use that type of filthy language. In fact he wanted to become the chairman of the Board but he is

wanted the Wakf Board, constituted under the Wakf Act of 1995, to be run under Shariat Law. Again next day Barkati flew in rage when Afazuzamman Khan, a close follower of Ahmed wanted to know about a Wakf property given by philanthropists to be used for religious or charitable purposes. Barkati threw water bottles at Khan twice making other members stunned and speechless. Interestingly Ahmed, a former minister of state in the earlier UPA government has got with him the support of members owing allegiance to the Opposition like the Congress. "The kind of language Barkati used at the meeting...we started wondering how an Imam could use that type of filthy language. In fact he wanted to become the chairman of the Board but he is

Taher Khan, Congress MLA and a member of the Board told Echo of India. The MP, who expressed his resentment in his close quarters about the whole episode, however, did not make any comment. "It is for the government to take a decision in this regard," Ahmed told Echo of India. But other members were harsher. "What is Imamsaab up to we cannot understand. In Islam anger is considered to be the worst vice and the Shahi Imam got influenced by it. Such acts are not acceptable from an Imam," Maulana A Abbas Rizvi, another member told Echo of India. When contacted, Barkati launched a scathing attack on Ahmed. "I have come here to cleanse the Board of beimans (traitors), those who are inimical to the interests of Muslims. I have got the mandate of Didai. Sultan is an agent of RSS, the BJP. All those who are against Islam will be eradicated," Barkati told Echo of India.

Kanhaiya joins DU march; ABVP raises 'go back' slogan

New Delhi, Feb 28 /-/ JNU student Kanhaiya Kumar, out on bail in a sedition case, today joined the anti-ABVP march at the Delhi University demanding "non-violence" on campuses even as ABVP members raised "go back Kanhaiya" slogans. The protest march by students and teachers of various universities here came after widespread violence between ABVP and AISA members on February 22 at the DU's Ramjas College. The clashes took place over cancellation of an invite to JNU students Umar Khalid and Shehnaaz Rashid for addressing a seminar at the College.

Kanhaiya, who led the protesters in shouting his traditional "azadi" slogans, clarified at the march that he wasn't participating in the protest as a "JNU student or Leftist" but as a student like others who are de-



Firefighters try to control a major fire which broke out at a residential-cum-commercial building on Monday night at Amratala Lane area under Burrabazar Police Station, in Kolkata on Tuesday.

Cracks found on outer walls of burning building in Burrabazar

KOLKATA, FEB 28 /-/ Cracks were today found on the outer walls of the century-old building where a major fire has been raging for over 16 hours in the city's wholesale market Burrabazar.

Fire fighters with 35 fire tenders continued their struggle to bring the blaze, which was noticed at around 9.35 pm on Monday, under control, fire department officials said.

No casualty has been reported from the building which has multiple godowns containing inflammable materials.

"Cracks were found on the exterior walls of the building. Our senior officers are there fighting the fire." Fire services minister and city Mayor Sovan Chatterjee told news agency PTI.

Fearing that the building may collapse, police had evacuated the building and adjacent houses on Monday night, besides controlling traffic movement in nearby roads. The ceiling of the third floor of the building has collapsed and the wooden staircase leading to the roof has been gutted, a senior fire department official said. "Fire is still raging in different pockets of the building," Chatterjee said.

The entire area has been cordoned off and locals are extending a helping hand to fire fighters who have found it difficult to reach the burning building as Amratala Lane, on which the building stands, is very congested. Senior engineers of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) and personnel from the state's disaster management team are present on the spot. On the reason of the fire, the officials said that it was yet to be ascertained but storage of inflammable material quickened the spread of fire. Traders at the Burrabazar area have decided to keep the Bagri market closed for the entire day.



manding "non-violence on university campuses". "You (ABVP) can't enforce one particular ideology on anyone and there should be room for discussion. You differ with our idea of patriotism, nationalism, free speech or anything under the sun. Come have a discussion with us but kindly don't indulge in any violence," he said while addressing the protesters. ABVP supporters, objected to his visit on the DU campus and shouted slogans of "go back Kanhaiya" and tried to disrupt his speech. Police, however, thwarted the attempt by ABVP supporters and did not let them come near the actual site of the march.

Kanhaiya has been at the centre of controversy since last February when he was arrested in a sedition case over an event on JNU campus where anti-national slogans were allegedly raised. Khalid and another student, Anirban Bhattacharya, were also arrested in the same case.

Mamata to focus now on district pvt hospitals too



Mamata Banerjee at the centenary celebration of Bharat Sevashram Sangha at Netaji Indoor Stadium —EOI Pix

KOLKATA, FEB 28 /-/ Broadening her sweep against malpractices in private hospitals in and around the city, Mamata Banerjee will focus on the district private hospitals and nursing homes where complaints of overcharging patients are rampant.

The chief minister would talk to the authorities of private hospitals and nursing homes in the districts during her periodic visits, state secretary sources said today. Mamata held meetings last week with representatives of private hospitals and nursing homes located in and around the city in a bid to redress frequent complaints of inflated bills, forced admission in ICUs, negligence in treatment and others. Similar complaints against private hospitals and nursing homes operating in the districts have been pouring in at the health department for a long time and the chief minister has decided to take a firm stand, a senior officer at the department said. On Monday, she said that nursing homes and pri-

Banking strike hits operation hard

NEW DELHI: Banking operations were hit today by the day-long, nation-wide strike called by employees of public sector banks, with ATMs running dry at various places across the country. The All India Bank Employees' Association (AIBE) claimed success, saying all the branches kept their shutters down. "People could not go to banks to transact anything, deposit money, withdraw money or do any other transaction. Government treasury transactions could not be done, import and export transactions were hit, money market operations were not possible," AIBE general secretary C H Venkatchalam told newsmen.

I&B Ministry to file FIRs against 277 publications for embezzlement

J&K govt to pay ad charges to newspapers on monthly basis

NEW DELHI, FEB 28 /-/ The Union information and broadcasting ministry has decided to lodge FIRs and pursue legal action against over 270 publications it feels have allegedly indulged in "fraud and embezzlement" to obtain money meant for government advertisements. As many as 277 publications from Lucknow and Delhi are under the Ministry's scanner after a spot check verification carried out by the Department of Audio Visual Publicity (DAPV) found gross irregularities in their publishing and circulation data. "The check was carried out in Delhi and Lucknow and it was found that the details provided by these publications were shockingly misleading. The ministry is of the view that these 277 publications have indulged in fraud and embezzlement of Government money" an official source said. Interestingly, 70 of the 277 publications which are now under the ministry's scanner were published from a single printing press, sources said.

"There is a strong view that these publications have used unfair means to obtain money meant for government ads from the DAPV. I&B minister M Venkatesh Naidu has taken a stern view of the matter and efforts will be made to recover money from them. In addition, the DAPV has also been directed to file FIRs against the owners, printers and publishers of these publications on the basis of spot verifications made," the source added. It is learnt that in 2015-16, an amount of around Rs 1.95 crore was disbursed to these publications while in 2016-17 about Rs 1.19 crore was disbursed to them for publicity of government advertisements. "Earlier, explanation had also been sought from these 277 publications and of these only 118 had given their reply. It has also been decided that the DAPV empanelment of these publications will also be cancelled," an official said. It may be added here that the Jammu and Kashmir government is planning to make payments to newspapers as periodicals on account of advertisement charges on a monthly basis from the next financial year to avoid piling up of liabilities.