

Regional Overview: South Asia 9-15 February 2020

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Danyal Kamal, Ashik KC

February 19,
2020



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Key trends in South Asia last week included: attacks on leaders by political rivals in Bangladesh and India; continuing demonstrations against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA) across India; and a continuing escalation of ceasefire violations along the Line of Control (LoC) between India and Pakistan.

Last week, politically motivated attacks on leaders continued in **Bangladesh** and **India**, with the number of reported fatalities stemming from these attacks increasing. In Bangladesh, two local leaders of Awami League (AL), a local leader of Bangladesh Jatiotabadi Chatra Dal (JCD), and a former Union Council member were reportedly killed by alleged political rivals. In India, a leader of a right-wing Hindu outfit, Shiv Sena Hindustan, was injured while his friend was reportedly killed in an attack. In the capital Delhi, an Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) volunteer was killed in an attack on the convoy of an AAP leader and Member of Delhi's Legislative Assembly. Also, in Telangana state, two people including a Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) leader were killed in an attack by a member of the Indian National Congress (INC) leading up to the elections for Primary Agriculture Cooperative Society (PACS), a basic unit co-operative credit institution regulated by Reserve Bank of India.

In India, nationwide demonstrations continue against the CAA, which is argued by many to be discriminatory, particularly towards Muslims. Sustained violence against CAA opponents by police, activists of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and other right-wing groups indicate the BJP's unwillingness to compromise on their Hindu-nationalist ideals. In several states, including Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, police intervention in the demonstrations led to violent clashes. In Tamil Nadu, over 170 demonstrators were arrested after a police baton charge during a demonstration with over 5,000 participants ([New Indian Express, 15 February 2020](#)). In Uttar Pradesh, a police constable was assaulted and detained by demonstrators. Opponents of the CAA were also attacked by supporters of the Act and

ruling BJP activists. In Bihar, supporters of the CAA pelted stones and attacked the convoy of a Communist Party of India and former Jawaharlal Nehru University Students Union leader, who is on a state-wide tour of Bihar campaigning against the CAA. His convoy has been attacked several times since he started the anti-CAA campaign in Bihar. Communist leaders argue that the police have acted as an extension of the ruling BJP ([Outlook, 14 February 2020](#)).

Meanwhile, across several states, including Assam and Nagaland in the northeast, left-leaning parties and parties representing indigenous minorities, including Naga People's Front (NPF), organized state-wide anti-CAA demonstrations. Indigenous groups in India's northeast have continually opposed the legitimizing of undocumented immigrants under the CAA fearing that it will threaten their communities in the region. Women's groups also continued anti-CAA demonstrations in a number of states including Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu. Under the CAA, people will be required to prove their citizenship. "Indian women are the demographic least likely to possess paperwork" ([Foreign Policy, 4 February 2020](#)), which has been an impetus in the rise of women-led demonstrations against the Act.

In Jammu & Kashmir, Indian security forces opened fire at a demonstration held on the death anniversary of a Kashmiri separatist and founder of the militant organization, National Liberation Front. Several demonstrators were injured in the incident. The Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) had issued a call for strike to mark the day, which was the first strike call by any militant group since the bifurcations of J&K ([Outlook, 6 February, 2020](#)). Meanwhile, ceasefire violations across the LoC between India and **Pakistan** continued last week. One Pakistani civilian and one Indian civilian were killed during cross-border shelling and ceasefire violations.



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