Regional Overview: South Asia22-28 March 2020

April 2, 2020

Key trends in South Asia last week include: an overall decrease in violence and demonstrations following security measures banning public gatherings (including demonstrations) to prevent the spread of coronavirus; and continuing demonstrations and violence over the spread of coronavirus across South Asia.

Reported events across South Asia decreased last week as Sri Lanka, Nepal, India, Bangladesh and several provinces of Pakistan enforced curfews, lockdowns and several other restrictive measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus (BBC, 25 March 2020). In **India,** ongoing demonstrations across the country against the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA) were shut down following the imposition of a nationwide lockdown in an attempt to slow the spread of the coronavirus (BBC, 25 March 2020). Earlier in the week, petrol bombs were hurled at an anti-CAA demonstration at Shaheen Bagh in Delhi following arguments over clearing the demonstration site during a one-day "citizen's curfew," observed as a trial before the lockdown to control the spread of coronavirus. The sit-in protest, organized and attended mainly by Muslim women, has been ongoing since 15 December 2019, four days after the upper house of parliament passed the Act.

Following the enforcement of lockdowns, violent resistance by people against security forces trying to impose lockdowns were reported throughout South Asia. In several states of **India**, including Rajasthan, Bihar, Maharashtra and Assam, locals attacked and clashed with security personnel enforcing the lockdown. In Rajasthan state, a police officer enforcing the lockdown was stabbed and injured by a mob. In Assam, a mob lynched and killed an officer after he attempted to enforce the lockdown ordered by the government. In **Nepal**, Nepali migrants attempting to enter the country clashed with security personnel enforcing a nationwide lockdown as a preventative measure to minimize the spread of coronavirus.

In **India**, security personnel resorted to the use of excessive force to enforce the lockdowns. In Maharashtra state, an ambulance driver died after security personnel assaulted him, suspecting him of transporting passengers illegally in the ambulance during the lockdown. A man was killed in West Bengal following an assault by police for violating the lockdown. In the state of Bihar, a vegetable trader was injured after police personnel fired shots at traders demonstrating against restricted entrance to the vegetable market.

Meanwhile, violent events and demonstrations were reported over the spread of coronavirus throughout South Asia. In **India's** Jharkhand state, youths who were advised to self-isolate following their return from other states, assaulted and killed a local who

objected to them violating self-isolation orders and roaming around the village. In Maharashtra state, vigilantes impersonating police officers assaulted locals and attempted to impose a lockdown. Several demonstrations were also reported in cities of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan against the establishment of coronavirus quarantine facilities and isolation wards. In **Bangladesh,** locals injured three laborers and vandalized the construction site of a coronavirus hospital fearing that the hospital would expose locals to the virus. In India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan, demonstrations were reported against the lack of proper measures to contain the spread of coronavirus. In **India**, quarantined coronavirus patients demonstrated against poor medical facilities. In **Bangladesh**, labor groups demonstrated demanding closure of factories in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak. In **Nepal**, health workers demonstrated demanding better protective gear and facilities to treat suspected coronavirus patients. In **Pakistan**, pilgrims placed in isolation after their return from Iran demonstrated demanding better quarantine facilities. Also, demonstrations against price gouging of essential food and energy products amidst the coronavirus outbreak were reported in India and Nepal.

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