

At least 26 dead in protests over India's Citizenship Law



New Delhi, December 22 (RHC)-- In India, at least 26 people have been killed in protests against the controversial Citizenship Law. Over the weekend, six more people died during protests, according to the police, adding that "the majority of the dead are young people."

Police said on Saturday that over 600 people were taken into custody. In addition, five people were arrested and 13 police cases filed for posting "objectionable" material on social media.

The Indian government has imposed a British colonial-era law, called Section 144, which bans the assembly of more than four people statewide. The law was also imposed elsewhere in India to thwart an expanding protest movement demanding the revocation of the citizenship law.

In an advisory issued on Friday night, India's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting asked for "strict compliance" by the country's broadcasters in reporting content that could inflame further violence.

Thousands of demonstrators, including students and a large number of women, have vowed to keep up their fight until the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), passed last week, is revoked. CAA provides a fast-track route to citizenship to "persecuted" Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis, Buddhists, Jains and Christians from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, but excludes Muslims.

Critics say the law is aimed at marginalising India's 200 million Muslims and is part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu-nationalist agenda, a claim the government denies.

As day broke in the capital New Delhi on Saturday, demonstrators held up their mobile phones as torches at India's biggest mosque Jama Masjid. The area witnessed violent protests on Friday evening.

In Patna in the eastern state of Bihar, three demonstrators suffered bullet wounds and six were hurt from stone-pelting after clashing with counter-protesters, police said. An all-women protest was held in Assam state's Guwahati city in the northeast, where the wave of protests started amid fears the immigrants would "dilute" their local cultures.

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