

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Apologise to young people, resign for 'failures': Rahul on Pradhan's 'terrorist' remark

NEW DELHI, JUNE 25: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday hit out at Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan for his "terrorist" remark against protesting students, saying he must immediately apologise to crores of young people in this country and resign for his "failures".

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said labelling anyone who questions the government as a "traitor" is the BJP's politics.

In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said, "Intoxicated by the arrogance of power, the Modi government has reached a point where the Education Minister labels students demanding their rights, fair examinations, and a secure future as 'terrorists'."

"Just think about it: the person whose failures led to



so many paper leaks, under whose watch 20 students lost their lives, and who plunged the futures of crores of young people into darkness-is today branding the aggrieved students and those raising their voices for them as 'terrorists'," the former Congress chief said.

He said this was nothing new and the BJP people had also called the farmers who feed the nation "andolan-jevi" and "parasites."

"They labelled those who asked questions as 'anti-nationals'. And now, they call the youth 'terrorists'. Labelling anyone who questions the government as a traitor-that is their politics," Gandhi said.

"Dharmendra Pradhan ji, apologize immediately to the crores of young people in this country and resign for your failures," he said.

"As for me-attack me all you want. I said it in Kota,

and I say it again: today, this education system has merely become an extortion racket. I will not let it remain this way. I will never stop raising the demand that every child receives affordable, quality education and fair examinations," Gandhi said.

CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke had also attacked Pradhan over his alleged remark calling the group a "B team of terrorists". Dipke had also shared a video clip on X showing Pradhan making the alleged remarks about the students' protest.

Dipke said, "Imagine what Pradhan said. While we are demanding justice for students who committed suicide, he said CJP is a B team of terrorists. The education minister is calling the youth of this country terrorists." (PTI)

AAP MP Sanjay Singh submits documents to SIT on alleged Ram Temple land scam

NEW DELHI, JUNE 25: Aam Aadmi Party Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh on Thursday submitted documents to the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing alleged irregularities in donations received by the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

In a post on X, Singh alleged that the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust committed a scam worth crores of rupees through land purchases.

"I have handed over all the documents to the SIT. What action will be taken next, only Lord Ram knows," Singh said.

The AAP leader said the documents could help uncover various aspects of the matter.

"The purpose of appearing before the SIT was to present my side and submit the documents in my possession," he



told reporters.

Singh claimed that the SIT chairman had himself contacted him and invited him to cooperate with the investigation.

Lucknow Divisional Commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant, who is heading the SIT, reached the commissioner's office at around 11 am and

handed over the documents to the investigation team.

The development comes days after the Uttar Pradesh government constituted a Special Investigation Team to probe allegations of embezzlement of donations received by the Ram Temple trust.

The SIT on Tuesday sub-

mitted its preliminary inquiry report to the Uttar Pradesh government.

The report was submitted by Lucknow Divisional Commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant to Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Sanjay Prasad, who is an ex officio member of the trust.

The probe is still underway.

The Uttar Pradesh government had constituted the SIT on June 13, following a request from the temple trust after allegations of malfeasance surfaced.

Meanwhile, his party said, Kejriwal is scheduled to land at Lucknow airport later in the day and proceed to Ayodhya by road.

He will stay overnight in Ayodhya, and on June 26, he will visit the Ram Temple and Hanumangarhi Temple. (PTI)

'If you ran in New Delhi, you'd win a million votes': Giorgia Meloni recalls 2023 India visit

NEW DELHI, JUNE 25: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in new book shared an anecdote from her 2023 India visit, recalling how the roads of New Delhi were lined with posters bearing her smile to welcome her arrival and later thanking her for the visit.

Writing in "Giorgia's Vision", based on her conversations with journalist Alessandro Sallusti, Meloni says the display prompted Italy's Deputy Prime Minister Antonio Tajani, who accompanied her during the trip, to joke that she would secure "a million votes" if she ran from a New Delhi constituency.

"When I arrived, there was a poster with my face and the word 'Welcome' every few feet along the road. When I left, the posters showed the same image, but now read 'Thank you for visiting'."

"My colleague Antonio Tajani, who was with me, joked: 'With all these posters, if you ran for the New Delhi constituency, you'd get a million votes'," says the Italian PM, recalling here March 2023 visit.

Meloni visited India twice in 2023, first for the 8th edition of 'Raisina Dialogue' in March and later for the G20 Summit in September.

The Italian leader, who shares a warm rapport with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and has been affectionately dubbed part of the "Melodi" duo by social media users, writes in the chapter 'Head Held High Among the World Greats' that successful diplomacy often requires moving beyond rigid formalities and find "your personal key" to connecting with others. "A few witty words, a personal story, a common in-



terest -- it can make all the difference," she observes.

The 49-year-old illustrates this approach through a series of anecdotes.

For instance, how sometimes meaningful diplomatic relationships begin with seemingly small moments: a cigarette by the sea, a conversation about Middle-earth from "The Lord of the Rings", a bouquet of roses or a child's toy from Japan. One example she recounts is how she forged some of her most "solid diplomatic relationships" during informal cigarette breaks.

This incident happened during her first meeting with Tunisian President Kais Saied, whom she describes as a "strong-willed leader" and "skilled negotiator".

Following a bilateral meeting that stretched for nearly two hours, Saied invited her to admire the sea view from his residence.

Meloni, who admits she had then resumed smoking after 13 years, hesitantly asked if she could light a cigarette.

The request unexpectedly transformed the atmosphere. "He was overjoyed! He pulled out his own pack of cigarettes, and that coffee and cigarette break became our moment," she recalls.

In the book, she warmly reflects on her interactions and personal friendships with several foreign leaders.

Among them is Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, whom she describes as one of the most spontaneous and engaging individuals she has met. Fluent in Italian and deeply knowledgeable about Italian politics, Meloni revealed how Rama regularly exchanges messages with her on current affairs.

She also recalls her friendship with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, who shares her fondness for Italian wines and once surprised her with a bouquet of orange roses on her birthday.

Former Japanese PM Fumio Kishida, who, as per Meloni, is also a fan of Italian wines, presented her with a "giant Hello Kitty doll for her daughter, Ginevra" during

the G7 summit in Hiroshima.

In Poland, then-prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki appealed to another of her passions.

"When I visited Warsaw, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki -- knowing how much I love Tolkien -- took me for a coffee at a cafe themed after 'The Lord of the Rings'. We stood there talking about a huge, gorgeous map of Middle-earth," she added.

Another gesture that particularly moved her came from Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. Before a bilateral meeting in Rome, he had her memoir, "I am Giorgia", translated into Uzbek and presented her with a bound copy.

Structured as a series of candid conversations with journalist Sallusti, "Giorgia's Vision" moves beyond a conventional political memoir into a broader conversation on "leadership, national identity, meritocracy, family, faith, and the future of Western civilization".

Ram Temple Donation Row: SC Asks Petitioner To Mention Plea Seeking Fair Probe On June 29

New Delhi, Jun 25: The Supreme Court on Thursday asked a petitioner to mention before it on June 29 his plea seeking registration of an FIR, and a fair and time-bound probe into the alleged embezzlement of donations received at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

The matter was mentioned for urgent listing before a bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Joymalaya Bagchi.

The petition, filed by practising advocates Ajay Kumar Rai and Dinesh Kumar Yadav, said a CBI-led multi-disciplinary special investigation team (SIT) should investigate the alleged financial irregularities and other purported illegalities concerning the affairs and administration of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust.

On Thursday, one of the petitioners mentioned the matter and urged the bench that the plea be listed for hearing on June 29.

"This is a PIL (public interest litigation) and it relates to the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust. It has been numbered but no date is shown," the petitioner said.

The bench observed if there was no deficiency in the plea, the registry would process it.

"Please approach the registry. If the deficiency is removed, it will be listed," the bench said.

The petitioner said the plea was registered and there were no deficiencies.

When he requested that the matter be listed for hearing on June 29, the bench said, "You mention it on Monday (June 29)".

The petition has sought directions to the Centre, the Uttar Pradesh government and the Trust for constituting and operationalising such regulatory, supervisory and audit mechanisms as may be necessary to safeguard public interest and maintain the confidence of

millions of devotees and donors.

"Whether or not the reports regarding missing funds and other alleged irregularities concerning the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust are ultimately found to be true, such reports have caused deep concern among the generations that struggled for the restoration of the glory of Ayodhya," the plea stated.

It said the SIT constituted by the Uttar Pradesh government has commenced its inquiry into the matter without the registration of an FIR or any regular criminal case.

The plea said the veracity of reports concerning alleged missing funds and other purported irregularities involving the Trust ought to be independently verified through a professional investigation conducted by a unified agency possessing the requisite expertise, resources and institutional mechanisms for handling complex financial and criminal inves-

tigations.

"Such an inquiry would inspire greater public confidence than a preliminary probe conducted by a special investigation team (SIT) comprising administrative officers who may not possess specialised credentials in criminal investigation," the plea said.

It said the issues involved not only concern the possible commission of cognisable offences but also directly affect the faith, sentiments and confidence of countless devotees and the public.

On June 13, the Uttar Pradesh government constituted the SIT on a request from the temple trust following allegations of misappropriation of donations received at the Ayodhya Ram temple.

The SIT comprises Lucknow Divisional Commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant, Inspector General of Police Kiran Sand Finance Department Special Secretary Neel Ratan. (Agencies)

IRCTC fines Rs 1 lakh, terminates caterer after Rajdhani passenger complains of fly in meal

NEW DELHI, JUN 25: The Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Limited (IRCTC) has imposed a fine of Rs 1 lakh and served a show-cause notice for termination of licence to a catering firm after a passenger complained of a fly in a meal served to him.

The passenger was travelling by the Ahmedabad-Mumbai Tejas Rajdhani Express on Tuesday.

"The passenger had opted for a combo lunch as an on-board meal. The train captain, along with the on-board catering manager, immediately attended to him when he reported a fly in his veg biryani. He also

complained about the poor quality of food supplied to him," IRCTC officials said.

"The concerned staff apologised to the passenger for the inconvenience and offered him a replacement, but he refused," they added.

The IRCTC said that the catering firm, Araha Hospitality Pvt Ltd, had picked up meals for all passengers from its licensed base kitchen at Surat.

Documents showed that IRCTC officials conducted an inspection on June 15 and the base kitchen was deep-cleaned on June 18 according to the schedule.

The licensee has been warned for the lapses observed in meal preparation

and packaging and has been advised to take immediate corrective measures to prevent recurrence of such incidents in the future," the IRCTC said.

It added, "The licensee has been instructed to ensure procurement of fresh raw materials with adequate shelf life and to verify the quality of all ingredients before use.

Further, regular checks of the air-tightness and condition of storage containers used for rice, pulses, atta, spices and other food items have been emphasised to prevent contamination and maintain product quality."

The IRCTC has directed the firm to strengthen qual-

ity control, hygiene and packaging practices at all stages of food preparation and handling, and to implement effective preventive measures to eliminate the possibility of foreign objects entering food products, thereby ensuring compliance with prescribed food safety standards.

Officials from the Railway Ministry said that 16 lakh meals are served per day on average on the Indian Railways network, and necessary measures are put in place from time to time with the objective of bringing improvement in the quality and hygiene of food in trains and to improve overall services for passengers.

Culture ministry officials inform Par panel on use of AI to preserve India's rich cultural heritage

NEW DELHI, JUN 25: Officials of the Ministry of Culture on Wednesday informed a parliamentary panel on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) for preservation, promotion and better interpretation of India's rich cultural heritage.

Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Vivek Aggarwal, informed the members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture on 'Integrating Artificial Intelligence for Cultural Interpretation and Heritage Preservation'.

The panel members later visited the 'Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum Site' and inspected the works being undertaken there.

Committee Chairman and JDU MP Sanjay Kumar Jha

said the meeting featured detailed discussions with Aggarwal and other senior officials on the use of AI for the preservation, promotion and better interpretation of India's rich cultural heritage, as well as the ongoing work under the Gyan Bharatam Mission.

"Emphasis was placed on preserving India's civilisational and cultural heritage through modern technology while effectively reaching it to the new generation," he said.

Jha said Bihar secured the first position in the country in the recently conducted mega-survey under the Gyan Bharatam Mission. "It is a matter of pride for all of us," he said.

eight lakh ancient manuscripts have been verified in

the state, with the highest number found in Madhubani district, he said, adding that this serves as important evidence of Mithila's rich tradition of knowledge.

"We are confident that the preservation, digitisation and study of invaluable manuscripts safely preserved in various regions of the country, including Mithila, will not only give our cultural and intellectual heritage a new identity worldwide but will also prove to be an invaluable source of knowledge for future generations," Jha said in a post on X.

In another post, he said an inspection was conducted with the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture regarding the under-construction 'Yuge-Yugeen

Bharat National Museum' in New Delhi.

"I am confident that this museum will prove to be an extremely important initiative in effectively presenting India's civilisational journey, rich historical heritage and cultural splendour before the new generation and the global community," he said.

This museum, being developed in an area of about 1.55 lakh square metres in the historic North and South Blocks, will be one of the largest museums in the world, Jha said.

More than 80,000 rare relics and heritage items connected to India's thousands-of-years-old civilisation, culture and history will be displayed through modern digital technology, he said. (PTI)

Ram temple trust withholds financial details, cites SIT probe after PMO-forwarded complaint

AYODHYA, JUN 25: Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust secretary Champat Rai declined to provide details regarding the trust's income, expenditure, donations, bank accounts, land transactions and assets, citing the ongoing SIT probe into allegations linked to the Ram temple project, officials said on Wednesday.

The issue came to light after a complaint submitted to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) by BJP leader Rajneesh Singh was forwarded to the Ayodhya district administration for necessary

action.

In a letter dated June 23 addressed to Additional District Magistrate (Administration) Vishu Raja, Additional District Magistrate (Law and Order) Indrakant Dwivedi said he had contacted Rai to seek the information sought in the complaint.

According to the letter, Rai informed him that a Special Investigation Team (SIT) inquiry was currently underway and that the probe panel was collecting all relevant records and information. In view of the ongoing investigation, the requested infor-

mation could not be provided at present, the ADM noted.

On June 12, Rajneesh Singh submitted a complaint to the PMO seeking directions to the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust to place in the public domain complete details of its finances and assets from its inception to date.

The complaint, forwarded by the PMO earlier this week under a reference number, sought disclosure of details relating to funds collected through the Samarpan Nidhi campaign,

donations received through various modes, contributions in the form of gold, silver and ornaments, bank accounts and financial transactions, land purchases and sales, expenditure on temple construction and administration, and audit and inspection reports.

his representation, Singh stated that crores of devotees in India and abroad had contributed to the construction of the Ram temple and therefore had a moral and democratic right to know how the donations and offerings had been utilised.