

# NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

## All 8 Arrested In Ram Temple Donation Row Sent To Police Custody Till Jun 29, Rs 79.85 Lakh Recovered

**AYODHYA (UP), JUN 26:** A court has granted police custody of all eight accused arrested in connection with the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya till June 29, during which investigators will continue questioning them, an official said on Friday.

Prosecution Officer K C Verma told reporters that they have been remanded in police custody till Monday and will be produced before the special court thereafter.

The eight arrested are Avinash Shukla, Anukalp Mishra, Lav Kush Mishra, Manish Kumar Yadav, Karunesh Pandey, Ram Shankar Mishra, Subhash Srivastava and Ramamshankar alias Tinnu Yadav.

Verma said investigators have so far recovered Rs 79.85 lakh during the probe.

He said appropriate provisions relating to criminal breach of trust by public ser-



vants and the Prevention of Corruption Act had been invoked as the accused were public servants and were allegedly involved in embezzlement. The prosecution officer said five to six of the arrested persons were bank employees who were employed for counting cash donations received at the temple and

were drawing salaries from the bank. He, however, declined to identify the individual bank employees at this stage of the investigation.

They said Tinnu Yadav was not a bank employee but worked as a driver, while Subhash Srivastava was in charge of the donation counting process.

The case relates to the alleged embezzlement of cash and valuables offered by devotees at the Ram temple. An FIR was registered after a preliminary report by a Special Investigation Team (SIT), and the investigation is being carried out by both the SIT and Ayodhya police. (Agencies)

## 'Ram Janambhoomi Trust General Secy Champat Rai And Trustee Anil Mishra Resign'

**LUCKNOW, JUN 26:** Shri Ram Janambhoomi Trust General Secretary Champat Rai and member trustee Anil Mishra have resigned, taking moral responsibility in connection with the alleged Ram Temple donation theft case, sources said on Friday.

The developments came after a First Information Report was registered in the alleged embezzlement of donations received at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

The case has been filed under multiple provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), including Sections 306, 316(5), 317(4), 317(5), 61 and 3(5), on the directions of the Uttar Pradesh Government.

Those who have been named in the FIR are: Anukalp Mishra, Lavkush Mishra, Avinash Shukla, Tinnu Yadav, Manish Yadav and others.

This action followed allegations by former SP MLA from Ayodhya, Pawan Pandey, who claimed that between 77 crore and 77.5 crore in donations were misappropriated from the Ram Mandir. In response to these claims, the state government constituted a three-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) on June 14 to probe the alleged scam, acting on a request from the Shri Ram Janambhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust.

Earlier in the day, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi



Adityanath lashed out at the opposition for its stand on the alleged embezzlement case at the Ram Mandir. Calling out the opposition, the CM said that those who had opposed the temple construction were now raising the issue for political gain.

CM said that the state government would adopt a "zero-tolerance" policy against anyone attempting to hurt public faith, as he addressed a public meeting in Deoria after the first FIR was registered on the basis of the Special Investigation Team's (SIT) preliminary report. The Chief Minister was addressing a programme for the inauguration and foundation stone laying of 106 development projects worth over Rs 456 crore.

Speaking on those questioning matters related to Lord Ram and Ayodhya, Adityanath alleged that those raising objections had earlier denied the existence of Lord Ram and the significance of

Ayodhya. "One side used to say that lord Ram doesn't even exist, meaning these people wanted to deny Ayodhya itself. They kept fighting the case in court continuously, kept fielding armies of lawyers against the construction of the Ram Janambhoomi temple, and the other side is the one that would wield sticks and fire bullets at those chanting 'Jai Shri Ram.'"

Those who would fire bullets at the mere mention of Lord Ram's name are now saying that there has been tampering with faith... They would incite riots on Ram Navami, ban Shri Krishna Janmashtami celebrations, prevent the Kanwar Yatra from taking place, incite riots during Durga Puja... Remember, the Congress didn't just loot the country; they tore it apart. The records of dishonesty and corruption they established, and those very people are now casting

aspersions on Ayodhya? This is unacceptable," Yogi Adityanath said.

"The government's intention is clear... everything will come before everyone. But I will appeal once again: do not test Ram devotees, stop tampering with their faith. If there are no facts or evidence, then stop the accusations and counter-accusations, and if there is evidence, then present it before the SIT. The government is proceeding with the action as per the SIT's recommendations, and while the team of senior officials is working, stop making political statements about it," he added.

Reiterating the government's stand on the probe, CM Adityanath said the truth would emerge through the investigation and appealed to those making allegations to cooperate with the SIT.

"The government had stated from day one that the absolute truth would be brought to light. I reiterate: do not put the devotees of Ram to the test, do not trifle with their faith; if you have proof, present the evidence to the SIT," he said.

Following the allegations, on June 14, the state government constituted a three-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the alleged scam involving offerings made at the Ram Mandir, following a request from the Shri Ram Janambhoomi Mandir Trust. (Agencies)

## Govt Should Amend Legal Framework To Make Passport, Aadhaar Valid Proofs Of Citizenship: Tharoor

**NEW DELHI, JUN 26:**

Amid the row over the passport-citizenship issue, senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Friday said the government should amend the legal framework to make both the passport and the Aadhaar card valid and conclusive proofs of Indian citizenship unless they are explicitly cancelled or withdrawn by the state.

He said implementing this requires solving a critical administrative hurdle because Aadhaar is currently issued based on 182 days of local residence rather than nationality, and it is held by citizens and non-citizen residents alike.

"The solution is straightforward. The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) should introduce a visually distinct Aadhaar card (featuring, say, a visible diagonal red stripe across the front), specifically designated for non-citizens living in India," Tharoor said.

"The recent statement by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) -- on #Passport-SevaDivas, no less! -- clarifying that an Indian passport is primarily a 'travel document and not conclusive proof of citizenship' has triggered a predictable wave of public bewilderment and political sparring," the former minister of state for external affairs said on X.Politics

While the government defends this as a long-standing legal position rooted in Section 20 of the Passports Act of 1967, which technically allows the state to issue passports to non-citizens under rare, public-interest circumstances, this is a distinction without a difference, meaningless to the average citizen, Tharoor argued.

"For decades, the passport has been considered the gold standard of identity. We nav-



igate the gruelling bureaucratic maze of police verifications and document checks required to obtain one, precisely because the state demands concrete proof of citizenship before granting it.

"To turn around and declare that the very document born from this rigorous vetting does not actually prove citizenship creates an absurd legal paradox," he said.

If a passport does not establish domestic citizenship, then what does, asked the MP from Thiruvananthapuram.

"The Supreme Court has already ruled that the Aadhaar card is merely a proof of identity and residence, not citizenship. This leaves millions of Indians in a bizarre administrative limbo where they possess world-class biometric and state-issued documents, yet none are legally deemed 'conclusive' proof of their nationality within their own borders," the Congress leader said.

"To end this fatuous controversy once and for all, a common-sense legislative overhaul is urgently required. The government should formally amend the legal framework to make both the passport and the

Aadhaar card valid, conclusive proofs of Indian citizenship unless they are explicitly cancelled or withdrawn by the state," he said.

Implementing this requires solving a critical administrative hurdle -- because Aadhaar is currently issued based on 182 days of local residence rather than nationality, it is held by citizens and non-citizen residents alike, he pointed out.

"The solution is straightforward. The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) should introduce a visually distinct Aadhaar card (featuring, say, a visible diagonal red stripe across the front), specifically designated for non-citizens living in India. By clearly demarcating the two categories, the state can safely mandate that carrying either a standard citizen's Aadhaar or a valid passport is compulsory and sufficient proof of citizenship for all Indian nationals at all times," he said.

This dual-document policy would immediately streamline domestic verification, eliminate arbitrary bureaucratic challenges during electoral revisions, and provide every Indian with absolute, unquestionable legal cer-

tainty regarding their identity, Tharoor said.

The raging controversy erupted on Thursday on the passport-citizenship issue with the government asserting that no new decision has been taken on the travel document in the past 12 years and the opposition alleging that groundwork is being done to "arbitrarily deny" citizenship rights to those who "disagree" with the ruling dispensation.

Citing the Passports Act 1967, government sources said passports can be given to even non-citizens "in the public interest" while Election Commission officials said passport continues to be among the 12 valid supporting documents required by voters to prove their eligibility to be on the voters' list.

Amid the row, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday published a gazette notification, dated June 20, announcing the hike in the application fee for an ordinary fresh passport containing 36 pages from Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,500.

The controversy emerged after the media reported, quoting MEA officials, that a passport is a travel document, not proof of citizenship. It is not a document that establishes citizenship, the MEA officials had said on Wednesday.

"It was not decided yesterday that the passport is not proof of citizenship. It was not even decided in the last 12 years under the Narendra Modi government. The passport has never been a proof of citizenship," a government source said.

The sources also cited Section 20 of the Passports Act, 1967, which says that passports and travel documents can be issued to persons who are not citizens of India. (Agencies)

## NIA chargesheets 11 accused for spreading terrorist ideology in West Bengal, northeastern states

**NEW DELHI, JUN 26:**

The National Investigation Agency has filed a chargesheet against 11 people in connection with a terror conspiracy hatched by an offshoot of the proscribed Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh terrorist outfit to spread its ideology in West Bengal and northeastern states, officials said on Friday.

The agency probe found the active involvement of the accused in the conspiracy orchestrated by the Imam Mahmud Kafila (IMK), an offshoot of the Ja-

maat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

The accused have been named in the chargesheet filed before the NIA Special Court in Guwahati, it said.

The conspiracy involved promotion of Bangladesh-based terrorist organisation's extremist agenda, radicalisation of vulnerable youth, and expansion of the outfit's network in India, the officials said.

Investigations by the anti-terror organisation showed that the JMB senior member Imam Mahmud Habibullah had established

the IMK to promote the banned outfit's nefarious agenda on Indian soil, a statement issued by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) said.

The NIA investigations had further revealed that the 11 chargesheeted accused had conspired to grow the presence of the IMK/JMB in India through clandestine meetings, religious indoctrination programmes, circulation of extremist literature, and use of digital platforms for anti-India propaganda, it said.

They were promoting al-

ligiance to the leadership of IMK/JMB, the statement said. Two of the key chargesheeted accused have been identified as Nasimuddin, who was spearheading the IMK's activities in Assam, and Jagir Mia, who was leading the outfit in Tripura, the anti-terror agency said.

During the course of the investigation, the NIA uncovered a trail of incriminating documents, electronic devices and digital records, which were used to build the case against the accused. (Agencies)

## Govt Proposes One-Year Residual Shelf Life For Imported Drugs

**NEW DELHI, JUN 26:**

The Union Health Ministry has published a draft notification proposing amendments to the drugs rules under which imported drugs should have a minimum residual shelf life of 12 months at the time of import.

The step would ensure that patients receive medicines with adequate usable shelf life and improve utilisation of pharmaceutical inventories across the supply chain.

The draft amendment published for public consultation vide gazette notification on June 22 proposes to revise the existing requirement of a minimum residual shelf life of more than 60 per cent for imported drugs to a minimum residual shelf life of 12 months at the time of import.

However, in view of their specialised nature and public health considerations, the



existing requirement of a minimum residual shelf life of more than 60 per cent shall continue to apply to biological products and radiopharmaceuticals.

The proposed amendment seeks to facilitate greater efficiency in the pharmaceutical supply chain while maintaining the availability of quality medicines for patients, the ministry said.

By ensuring that imported

drugs have a minimum remaining shelf life of 12 months upon entry into the country, the proposal provides sufficient time for distribution and consumption before expiry, thereby ensuring that patients continue to receive medicines with adequate usable shelf life, officials said.

The amendment is also expected to improve utilisation of pharmaceutical invento-

ries across the supply chain by reducing avoidable wastage of medicines arising from restrictive residual shelf-life requirements.

This is expected to optimise supply management, reduce costs, and strengthen the availability of essential medicines in the country, they said.

The ministry said the proposed amendment pertains solely to the residual shelf-life requirement applicable at the time of import of drugs.

The proposal does not alter any other regulatory requirements relating to the quality, safety or efficacy of medicines under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and the Drugs Rules, 1945.

The ministry has invited objections and suggestions from all stakeholders on the draft notification. (Agencies)

**NEW DELHI, JUN 26:**

The Congress on Friday condoled the loss of lives in the twin earthquakes that have struck Venezuela and stressed that India stands ready to extend humanitarian assistance as well as every possible support to the Venezuelans as they confront this tragedy.

The opposition party said the people of India stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Venezuela in this hour of grief.

In a post on X, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said, "On behalf of the Indian National Congress, I express our profound grief and deepest condolences over the catastrophic loss of life and widespread devastation caused by the twin earthquakes that have struck Venezuela.

"Our heartfelt sympathies are with the bereaved families and every Venezuelan af-



ected by this unimaginable tragedy. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who have lost their loved ones, those still trapped beneath the rubble, the injured, and the countless rescue workers risking their lives to save others," the Congress chief said.

India and Venezuela have long shared warm and friendly relations, founded on mutual respect, solidarity, and cooperation, he said.

"In this hour of profound grief, the people of India stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of

Venezuela," Kharge said.

India stands ready to extend humanitarian assistance and every possible support to the people of Venezuela as they confront this grave tragedy, he said.

"May those who have lost their lives rest in peace, may the injured recover swiftly, and may the resilient people of Venezuela find the strength to rebuild and recover," Kharge said.

The 7.2- and 7.5-magnitude earthquakes that struck Wednesday evening were among the strongest in Venezuela in more than a century and were felt throughout the region.

The official death toll rose to around 235 late Thursday, with at least 4,300 people injured, Venezuela Health Minister Carlos Alvarado told state media. The number of casualties is expected to climb, with thousands reported missing. (Agencies)