

PM announced Ram temple trust in Parliament, must break silence on floor of House: Cong

NEW DELHI, July 17: The Congress on Friday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced in Parliament the setting up of the Ram temple trust whose activities have resulted in "aastha dhoka (betrayal of faith)", and demanded that he must break his silence on the issue of alleged donation theft on the floor of the House.

Speaking with PTI ahead of Parliament's Monsoon Session, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said the PM created the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust through an announcement in Parliament and it is only appropriate that he takes the two Houses into confidence on what has happened.

"On February 5, 2020, the prime minister himself got up in the Lok Sabha, one of those rare occasions when he comes to Parliament. He came to Parliament to make the announcement that his government was setting up the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust," Ramesh said.

The Trust was set up by the prime minister and it comprises people appointed by him, Ramesh said, adding



the Trust's activities, its functions, its terms of reference were given by Modi. "It is this Trust that has betrayed the faith of crores of Indians. There has been 'chanda chori, aastha dhoka' by the activities of this Trust," Ramesh alleged.

"So the prime minister must break his silence on the floor of the House. He created this Trust through an announcement on the 5th of February 2020. It's only appropriate that he takes Parliament into confidence. What has happened? How has this 'chanda chori, aastha

dhoka' taken place in the Trust that he himself took great pride in creating," the Congress leader said. <

The alleged embezzlement came to light last month, following which an SIT was constituted. The investigation has so far led to the arrest of eight accused, resignation of two Trust functionaries and the recovery of cash allegedly siphoned off from temple donations. The probe is continuing.

A preliminary nine-page report has been submitted to the government of June 23

by the SIT probing the case, which had triggered a series of actions in the case.

Former Trust general secretary Champat Rai, whose resignation was accepted amid the controversy, had said in a letter that he would break his silence only after the SIT submitted its final report. In the same letter, he also questioned how the confidential preliminary SIT report had found its way into the public domain.

The probe has also come under the scrutiny of the Supreme Court. On July 13, the apex court directed the SIT to submit a status report on its investigation while issuing notice to the Trust on petitions seeking a fair and time-bound probe into the alleged donation embezzlement.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant sought the status report from the SIT, which comprises Lucknow Divisional Commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant, Inspector General of Police Kiran S and Special Secretary (Finance) Neel Ratan.

Sources said the Special Investigation Team (SIT) may submit an interim report to the Supreme Court on Monday in compliance with the apex court's directions.

Rath Yatra: Pulling Of Chariots Resumes Amid Chants Of 'Jay Jagannath'

PURI, JUL 17: The chariots of Lord Jagannath and his siblings resumed their journey to the Gundicha Temple in Odisha's Puri on Friday as part of the annual Rath Yatra festival that commenced a day ago, officials said.

None of the three chariots had reached the temple, around 2.6 km away from the 12th-century Shree Jagannath Temple, due to a delay in the 'Pahandi' rituals on Thursday, they said.

The deities remained on the chariots overnight.

Amid chants of 'Jay Jagannath', lakhs of devotees started pulling the chariots of the trinity - Lord Balabhadra, Devi Subhadra and Lord Jagannath - this morning.

In a video message, Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb, considered the first servitor of Lord Jagannath and sibling deities, said, "There is nothing wrong in chariot pulling being made on the day after the scheduled Rath Yatra. Many times, the chariots could not reach the destination on schedule, and they were pulled the next day. The chariot pulling was halted on Thursday due to darkness."Geographic Reference

Lord Balabhadra's 'Talakadhwaja' chariot had stopped at Market Chhak after covering around 700 metres on the Grand Road.

Similarly, Devi Subhadra's 'Darpadalana' chariot halted at Marichikote Chhak after



covering around 400 metres, while Lord Jagannath's Nandighosha chariot was pulled only for a few yards and remained near Singhadwar (Lion's Gate) of the main temple, the officials said.

While the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) estimated that 10-12 lakh devotees participated in the Rath Yatra, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) put the turnout at 8-9 lakh.

There was absolutely no delay in rituals, but the 'Pahandi' was delayed by over one hour. Lord Jagannath's idol did not move for about 40 minutes at the main gate, due to which the 'Pahandi' was delayed," SJTA chief administrator Arabinda Padhee told reporters.

Padhee said the sibling deities would stay on the chariots on Friday night, while the entry procession into the Gundicha Temple,

considered the birthplace of the sibling deities, would be held on Saturday, he added.

Despite adverse weather conditions, all rituals were completed on time, but the movement of Lord Jagannath's idol was delayed by 40 minutes, affecting the chariot pulling schedule, another temple administration official said.Executive Branch

On the absence of the traditional 'Tahika' (ornate floral crown) during Lord Jagannath's 'Pahandi' ritual, Padhee said it was removed as it became wet and heavy due to rain.

The annual Rath Yatra is held on the second day of the Odia month of 'Ashadha Shukla Tithi' and is the only occasion when the sibling deities are taken out from the 'Ratna Sinhasana', the jewelled throne of the temple.

The chariot pulling had be-

gun on Thursday after the ceremonial 'Chhera Pahanra' (sweeping of chariots) by Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb and the visit of Puri Shankaracharya Swami Nischalananda Saraswati, a temple official said.

Amid chants of 'Hari Bol', beating of cymbals and blowing of trumpets and conch shells, a large number of devotees witnessed the festival as the rain subsided.

Heavy rain failed to dampen the spirit of devotees, who were seen dancing and celebrating on the Grand Road.

Special arrangements were made to drain rainwater from the Grand Road and facilitate the procession, as devotees were pulling the chariots of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra from the 12th-century shrine to the Gundicha Temple. (Agencies)

TMC's Koel Mallick resigns from Rajya Sabha, becomes 4th MP to sever ties with Mamata

KOLKATA, JUL 16: Actor-turned-politician and Trinamool Congress MP Rukmini Mallick, popularly known as Koel Mallick, on Thursday resigned from the Rajya Sabha, the fourth TMC MP to do so ever since the Mamata Banerjee-led party was ousted from power in West Bengal.

Mallick met the Rajya Sabha chairman CP Radhakrishnan and put in her papers.

"Shrimati Rukmini Mallick, an elected Member of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha), representing the state of West Bengal, resigned her seat in the Rajya Sabha and her resignation has been accepted by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha w.e.f. 16 July, 2026," a Rajya Sabha notification later said. Her resignation dealt a fresh blow to the embattled TMC's strength in the Upper House, reducing it to the single-digit figure of nine, amid speculations that more from the party may follow suit and raising fresh questions on the party's stability in Parliament.

"I do hereby resign from the membership of Rajya Sabha, which may please be accepted with immediate effect," she said in her resignation letter.

Mallick's departure came in the wake of three former TMC MPs - Sukhendu Sekhar Roy, Sushmita Dev, and Prakash Chik Baraik - who defected to the BJP following TMC's poll debacle in Bengal and the subsequent widespread rebellion in party ranks, and received Rajya Sabha bypoll tickets for the vacant seats.

, following the footsteps of some of the earlier TMC rebels in Parliament, Mallick, too, met BJP leader Bhupendra Yadav in Delhi after quitting as MP, fuelling the buzz on whether the actor would join the saffron party or choose to move over to the dissident MPs.

Mallick, one of TMC's celebrity nominees to the Rajya Sabha, was picked by Mamata Banerjee in February. She had submitted her nomination on March 5, alongside Supreme Court lawyer Menaka Guruswamy and former IPS officer Rajeev Kumar.

She, however, did not at-



tend a single sitting of the Parliament.

One of Bengal's best-known film stars and the daughter of veteran actor Ranjit Mallick, Koel entered active politics only a month before being nominated to the Rajya Sabha. Her nomination was viewed as part of Banerjee's practice of bringing prominent public figures into Parliament.

"This is a new phase of my life, and I seek everyone's blessings for the responsibility I am about to shoulder. Serving the people and the country was in my mind for some time, and I am fortunate to have received that opportunity," she had said after filing her nomination.

In January, during a highly charged political atmosphere in Bengal, TMC's national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee had visited the Mallick residence with his party's performance report card, as part of his pre-poll celebrity outreach strategy.Geographic Reference

"All I have to say is I like him very much," Ranjit Mallick had certified Abhishek following a warm embrace of greeting.

Political observers have linked Koel's exit to the broader churn within the party after its loss of power in Bengal.

Besides the Rajya Sabha, the party's strength in Lok Sabha, too, has shrunk drastically after 20 rebel MPs - most of whom like Sudip Bandyopadhyay and Kakali Ghosh Dastidar were long-time associates of Banerjee - broke away from the TMC to merge with the lesser-known Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI) and pledged support to the BJP-led NDA.

Closer home, the Ritabrata Banerjee-led faction of the party has escalated the battle

for Trinamool's identity by consolidating rebel ranks, inducting senior leaders, and pressing for his claim as the party's legitimate leadership.

The growing desertions - which include top leaders and former Mamata-loyalists like Firhad Hakim, Aroop Biswas and, the most recent, Madan Mitra - have mounted pressure on the Banerjee-led "Kalghat Trinamool", turning the internal split into a direct political challenge.

"Koel Mallick is not an organic political leader. She gained lateral entry into politics in the wake of her proximity to the TMC's top leadership. Shortly afterwards, we saw her getting nominated to Rajya Sabha. She was nowhere to be found after she became an MP," BJP Bengal president Samik Bhattacharya said, responding to the development.

"We are happy to see her resurface now and wanting to sever ties with Mamata Banerjee," he said.

Bhattacharya maintained that Mamata Banerjee's party has lost all credibility among the people.

"The TMC, which was never a political party to begin with, is now finished. There's no point in discussing a party that has lost all relevance among people. Those TMC leaders who are desperately trying to change shirts and whose backgrounds stand exposed are also being closely monitored by the people," he added.

TMC MP and Mamata loyalist Kalyan Banerjee called the spate of exits "a new tactic adopted by the BJP to increase their strength in both Houses of the Parliament by any means possible".

"Earlier, three members resigned, but Koel Mallick did not resign with them.

Had all four resigned together, the Rajya Sabha election for all four vacancies would have been held simultaneously, and the BJP would not have won in one seat. That is why the resignations were staggered," he maintained.

"After the Rajya Sabha elections got over, Koel Mallick was brought in because there is now a single fresh vacancy. It is a safe political strategy for the BJP," he added.

Stating that the party was aware of Koel meeting Bhupendra Yadav and that she might join the saffron camp, Banerjee said such a "tactic" cut a sorry picture of the state of political affairs in Bengal.

West Bengal has long been respected across the country for its education, culture, and political tradition, he said, adding the state has sent many distinguished parliamentarians who were driven by commitment to their parties, dedication to the people, and the courage to fight for their interests.

"Looking at the number of MPs and MLAs who have defected to the BJP over the past two months presents a dirty picture of Bengal's political culture. It is for the people of the state to decide whether this is right or wrong," he said. (PTI)

No evidence mobile phones cause brain cancer: new study

LONDON, JULY 17: Electromagnetic waves are everywhere. They're the reason you can hear music when you turn on the radio, use wi-fi, find your way using satellite navigation, and make calls on a mobile phone.

They are a form of electromagnetic radiation and sit at the weaker end of the spectrum, meaning they have the lowest energy and the longest wavelength.

But because very high-energy forms of electromagnetic radiation - such as x-rays - can cause cancer, there has long been concern that radio waves could also harm human health.

With the explosion of mobile phone use over the past two decades, there has been particular concern over whether holding these devices to your ear could increase your risk of brain cancer.

In 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) commissioned 13 reviews on the health effects of electromagnetic waves.

NEW DELHI, JUL 17: Educator and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk on Friday asserted that he would "stay alive till July 20 at any cost", even as his indefinite hunger strike entered its 20th day amid a warning from doctors that his prolonged fast has reached a critical stage.

The Cockroach Janta Party's (CJP) protest at Jantar Mantar over alleged examination irregularities entered its 28th day, with Wangchuk urging people to ensure a massive turnout for the outfit's proposed march to Parliament on July 20.

Addressing supporters at the protest site, Wangchuk acknowledged his weakening physical condition but said his resolve remained unshaken.

"I am weak from the outside but very strong inside. I am sure all of you are strong from the inside, and outside too. We need this energy for July 20, when we will take out a peaceful march to Parliament. We will go together and present our plea in the temple of democracy," he said.



"I will stay alive till July 20 at any cost. If you don't come and July 20 is not successful, I will come back as a ghost," he said in a lighter vein, drawing cheers from the gathering.

On Thursday, doctors attending to Wangchuk had warned that his condition had entered a critical stage due to the prolonged fast and that the next phase could be alarming, with the possibility of organ damage if the hunger strike continued.

Wangchuk, however, had refused to call off the fast, saying that ending it without any response from the gov-

ernment would send a wrong message. He maintained that the focus should now be on making the July 20 Parliament march a success.

The issue has also reached the Delhi High Court, which directed authorities to monitor Wangchuk's health daily and provide medical assistance if his condition deteriorates.

Meanwhile, the CPI(ML) Liberation-affiliated All India Students' Association (AISA) said the condition of its members Neha, Manish and Aameen, who are also on an indefinite hunger strike at a separate stage of the

protest site, had reached "severe stages".

In a statement, AISA said Aameen was at risk of hypovolemic shock due to dehydration, Neha's random blood sugar level had fallen to a dangerous 49 mg/dL and Manish had lost more than 10 per cent of his body weight.

"However, students are determined to remain in solidarity with Sonam Wangchuk until the government faces its crimes," the organisation said.

The CJP has been demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Rs 1 crore compensation for the families of students who allegedly died by suicide over alleged examination irregularities. The outfit has called for a peaceful march to Parliament on July 20, coinciding with the opening day of the Monsoon Session.

The CJP protest began on June 20, while Wangchuk joined the agitation on June 28 and has remained on an indefinite hunger strike since. (Agencies)

widespread and perhaps even grown.

What the new study looked at The 13 reviews the WHO commissioned in 2019 aimed to understand what we already know and what we still need to find out about any health effects of electromagnetic waves.

Teams of scientists looked through the published scientific evidence available for a particular health concern and wrote a report summarising not only the findings but also the quality, or strength, of the available data.

Reviews were completed for a number of different health concerns, including fertility, symptoms such as headaches or tinnitus, and cancer.

But the WHO has not yet completed its analysis of the commissioned reviews.

So two authors of the review on brain cancer have summarised their own results, and those of the other reviews. This new research gives us an insight into the WHO's expected findings.