

Ram temple donation row: SC urged to adjourn hearing on pleas due to unavailability of SG

NEW DELHI, AUG 10: The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to consider deferring the hearing on a batch of pleas seeking a court-monitored SIT probe into alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya on a request by the counsel of the Uttar Pradesh government.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana was apprised by a lawyer that Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who has been appearing for the Uttar Pradesh government, has gone to the United Nations with a delegation to attend a function there.

The bench asked whether the cases are listed for hearing.

"Yes, item number 30-33...please take it up next week," the lawyer said. The bench agreed to consider the request.

On July 27, the bench took note of setting up of a four-member SIT headed by IGP Kiran S to probe alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya. It had asked the Uttar Pradesh government to also include a forensic auditor in the probe team.

Observing that "remedial actions will have to be taken",



the bench had said steps will be taken to "ensure transparency".

The bench also directed the Special Investigation Team (SIT) to submit a status report in two weeks.

On July 20, the bench had asked the Uttar Pradesh Government to apprise it about the possibility of setting up an SIT to probe the alleged embezzlement of donations.

It had asked the solicitor general to take instructions on whether the SIT, which had examined the entire issue before the registration of the FIR, could be entrusted with the responsibility to probe the case instead of the local police.

"Just a word of caution. Please don't politicise the issue. The courts are not a place for politics. It is a simple case of commission of crime. We are (here) just to ensure a proper investigation," the CJI had said.

Investigation is going on and eight persons have been arrested, the law officer had said, adding he cannot divulge much.

On July 13, the bench had directed the Uttar Pradesh Police to submit a status report in the matter.

It had also issued a notice to the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust on pleas seeking a fair and time-bound probe into the alleged donation theft.

Narendra Kumar Goswami, one of the three petitioners, moved the top court seeking a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the matter.

He also sought an audit of the finances of the Trust, which manages the affairs of the Ram temple, by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).

Ajay Kumar Rai and Dinesh Kumar Yadav filed the second petition seeking similar measures.

Besides seeking a Supreme Court-monitored CBI probe, the third petition filed by RJD MP Sudhakar Singh has sought a forensic audit of the entire finances of the temple trust.

Opposition MPs protest in Parliament complex on Ram temple donation 'theft'

NEW DELHI, Aug 10: Opposition MPs, including Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, protested in Parliament House complex on Monday over the alleged theft of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya and the "police excesses" against student protesters.

They demanded that Home Minister Amit Shah must come to Parliament and make a statement on the alleged police excesses during the July 20 student protest over the paper leak issue. Newspaper Subscriptions

Carrying placards against the Government, the MPs protested in front of the Makar Dwar of Parliament with slogans such as 'chhanda chor, gaddi chor', 'Amit Shah jawaab do' and 'chanda chor kahan milenge, BJP ke daftar mein'.



The MPs also kept a donation box at the spot to symbolise the alleged theft of donations at the Ram temple and lined up around them to raise slogans against the government.

The opposition MPs, mostly from the Congress and the Samajwadi Party, lined up behind a big banner that read 'Amit Shah jawaab

do", and raised slogans against the Home Minister.

The INDIA bloc has vowed to corner the Government on issues of alleged theft of donations at the Ram temple and the use of "brutal force" against students during their protests last week.

INDIA bloc parties' floor leaders met in Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha

Malikarjun Kharge's chamber in Parliament complex, and vowed to corner the government on the two issues of "chhanda chori" and "police excesses" against students.

Both Houses of Parliament have remained deadlocked over the Opposition's demands with most of the legislative business being conducted amid din. (PTI)

Shows govt's intolerance, state of judiciary: Sibal on court denying bail to two ex-TISS students

NEW DELHI, AUG 10: Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Monday said it was a shame that two ex-TISS students were denied anticipatory bail by a court and claimed that it showed the government's intolerance as well as the state of the judiciary.

A court in Mumbai on Friday denied anticipatory bail to two former students of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) who are facing criminal cases for holding an unauthorised campus gathering to pay homage to former Delhi University professor G N Saibaba, and raising slogans seeking release of undertrial prisoners Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam.

Additional Sessions Judge V B Bohra granted pre-arrest bail to seven other students.

In a post on X, Sibal said, "Ex-TISS Students. Shame that they were: denied anticipatory bail. Allegedly: Raised slogans seeking release of Umar Khalid & Sharjeel Imam (In jail since 2020)."

"What does this tell you about: 1) Government's level of intolerance; 2) The police; 3) State of the judiciary?" the Independent Rajya Sabha MP said.

The court stated that while paying homage to Saibaba, who was acquitted by the Bombay High Court in a Naxalism-related case before



his death, was not illegal, shouting slogans in support of undertrials booked in a UAPA case in an educational institute "raises doubts" about the conduct of the accused -- Kamakhya Das (23) and Abhirup Paul (32).

It also noted that generally, while paying homage to deceased persons, phrases such as "Rest in Peace" are used. But the accused students allegedly used the words "Rest in Power (1967- Forever)".

The act, coupled with the material found with them, "certainly raises doubt about their conduct", the judge remarked in separate orders denying relief to the two former TISS students.

The court granted anticipatory bail to seven other students -- Utkarsh Khuntia, Yash Kaundilya, Avantika, Ishpreet Kaur, Nikita Monica D'Souza, Hardika Bhagat and Satyam Yadav.

Their custodial interrogation was not required as they had cooperated with the investigation, the court said.

The alleged incident occurred on October 12, 2025, when a group of 10 to 12 students gathered in front of the hostel at TISS without prior permission from the administration.

According to police, the students paid homage to Saibaba on his death anniversary by arranging his photographs, lighting candles, reading his poems and displaying the message "Rest in Power (since 1967- forever)", the police said.

The group also raised slogans demanding the release of Khalid and Imam, who are currently in jail under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

The complaint was initially lodged by an associate dean of TISS at the Trombay police station, and the probe

was later transferred to the Crime Investigation Department (CID).

While denying pre-arrest bail to Das and Paul, the court noted that downloaded books published by members of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) were found on electronic gadgets such as laptops and mobile phones seized from their possession.

Mere downloading of such books would not amount to an offence, the court said.

But the investigation revealed that Paul, a member of the Progressive Students Forum, had visited several places for "field work" as indicated by his WhatsApp chats, and allegedly tried to change the mindset of other students to implement the Maoist ideology, the court said.

The books, though not banned by the government, reportedly instigated division of India, the court said.

Das and Paul allegedly deleted certain information from their devices, and Das also allegedly threatened a police officer that he would be removed from service, the court said.

Thus, their custodial interrogation was necessary to ascertain their intention in downloading the books and raising the slogans, the court said.

PM's Image 'Destroyed'; Modi, Shah Cannot Escape Consequences Of Their Actions: Rahul

NEW DELHI, AUG 10: Upping the ante against the government over the alleged police "brutalities" against student protesters, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Monday pushed for Home Minister Amit Shah's resignation and claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's image has been "destroyed" and can never be rebuilt.

The former Congress president said the youth of India will not allow the prime minister and the home minister, or any official, to escape the consequences of their actions. South Asians & Diaspora

On July 20, 2026, thousands of youths across India demanded accountability from those they elected to office and sooner or later, they will get that accountability, Gandhi said in an article published in The Hindu.

"On July 20, 2026, India's young people came together to demand a fair education system and accountability for paper leaks. These young women and men came from every caste, class, region and religion," he said.

They were brave enough to demand justice, wise enough to know their Constitutional rights, tender enough to laugh at their own turmoil, and earnest enough to believe that they could fight and win, the Congress leader said.

The nation watched the protesters in awe, as they sang, danced, laughed, held hands and stood together, he said.

"Their resistance gave voice to the pain both of their own generation, and of crores of Indians who are suffering but have been silenced by fear," he said.

Gandhi stressed that the protests carried forward India's proud legacy of peaceful resistance, a tradition which won it independence and is protected by Article 19 of the Constitution.

"Yet, the government tried to crush the youth's voice with a brutal assault. They were attacked with tear gas shells, beaten with nail-studded lathis and shot with pellet guns," he said Gandhi cited the example of 19-year-old Sahil Lochab, whom he had earlier met, saying he had hundreds of lead pellets



lodged all over his body.

"A pellet struck his eye, likely blinding him. Policemen wielding batons brutally assaulted young women, injuring many on their private parts.

Minors were beaten with lathis, their bones broken, gashes and bruises on their bodies," he said.

In Bihar, student protesters were shot with firearms, including an AK-47, in Siwan, leaving many severely injured, he said.

Who authorised this "illegal and unconstitutional violence", Gandhi asked.

"The Narendra Modi government prides itself on its centralised control. Newspaper Subscriptions

"Whether it is a mission to Mars or an Olympic medal, it repeatedly trumpets that the credit is due to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. Nothing moves without their approval," he said.

The violence happened in the heart of Delhi, barely 500 metres from Parliament and both the security forces deployed, Delhi Police and the Rapid Action Force (RAF), report directly to the home minister, he pointed out.

"There are only two possibilities. First, he (Shah) authorised the attack on the students—in which case he is culpable. Second, he had no idea that it was taking place—which means that he is entirely incompetent.

"Either way, as Home Minister, what happened on that day is his responsibility, and he must resign," Gandhi said in his article.

Instead, Shah's inaction proves that he approves of the attack on students, he said.

"He (Shah) has not ordered any inquiry or even issued a statement. He has refused to come to Parliament

and motions filed daily by the Opposition asking for a discussion have been summarily rejected," the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha said. "At the same time, Prime Minister Modi, desperate to protect his image, has activated his propaganda machinery and Godi media. First information reports and detentions of young protesters continue, in order to intimidate them. The Bharatiya Janata Party's online trolls threaten young female protesters and their parents, forcing them to issue public apologies," he said.

Prime Minister Modi personally made a video "forgiving" the youth of India for exercising their legitimate right to express themselves, he said.

How absurd it is for a prime minister to forgive his own people when they are demanding accountability, Gandhi asked.

"Since Prime Minister Modi is clearly so out of touch, let me warn him— young people across the country have awakened. His image is destroyed and can never be rebuilt. The youth of India will not allow him, Home Minister Shah, or any official to escape the consequences of their actions," Gandhi said.

"We in the Opposition stand with the youth. We will not allow these crimes to pass unpunished," he asserted.

Pointing out that on July 20, 2026, Sahil and thousands of young people across India demanded accountability from those they elected to office, Gandhi said sooner or later, they will get that accountability.

"And we will ensure it," Gandhi added.

Sharing a screenshot of Gandhi's article on X, Con-

gress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi raised the voice of protesting students in The Hindu today. "The nation has had enough of this Union Home Minister who is full of bluff, bombast, and bluster. He must RESIGN." Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge also shared Gandhi's opinion piece and said he has raised the voice of the youth.

Gandhi on Sunday had questioned Shah's silence over alleged police brutalities against protesting students and asserted that sooner or later, the BJP leader would have to answer for "this crime".

Both Houses of Parliament remain deadlocked over the opposition's demand that Shah should make a statement in both Houses on the alleged police brutalities during the students' July 20 protest over the paper-leak issue.

Most of the legislative business has been conducted amid din. (Agencies)

KOLKATA, AUG 9: Former West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday faced a hostile reception in Halisahar as protesters surrounded her vehicle, shouted "chor" slogans and hurled mud and slippers when she went to meet a TMC worker's family, who allegedly died in custody.

Her successor Suvendu Adhikari and other senior BJP leaders claimed that the incident reflected "strong public anger" against the TMC supremo.

The confrontation turned Banerjee's visit to Halisahar in North 24 Parganas district into a charged political spectacle, with police forming a cordon around her vehicle as protesters blocked its passage, while rival camps traded accusations of political provocation, public anger and administrative failure.

Adhikari, denying any involvement of the ruling BJP in the incident, said the protest reflected "strong public anger" against Banerjee and asserted that since she had "committed so much theft", she would have to hear people call her a "thief".

After reaching the area, Banerjee told reporters: "My car has been attacked with stones, shoes and mud.

This is nothing but a conspiracy. I had informed the police that I would be coming, but despite that, no security measures were taken."

"Forget security. The police are protecting lumpens. Bengal has fallen into the hands of lumpens. We will file a case," she said.

"My head could have been smashed. We could have died here. The police are protecting the BJP," she said, accusing Adhikari, who holds the Home portfolio, of using the police and alleged mafia elements to run the state. Building Materials & Supplies

She also claimed that the deceased worker's family was being threatened by BJP supporters.

The BJP, however, sought to distance itself from the violence while arguing that the protest reflected local anger against Banerjee.

BJP state president Samik Bhat-tacharya said the party did not support any attack on the former chief minister's vehicle and denied the involvement of BJP workers.

"Such an incident, if it has happened, will blacken the face of West Bengal in the future. We condemn the incident and, if such an incident has taken place, the police under Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari

will immediately take action against those responsible," he said.

Adhikari, however, mounted a sharp political counterattack, questioning Banerjee's decision to visit Halisahar and asking why she had not gone to the family of the RG Kar rape-murder victim, referred to by protesters as 'Abhaya', on the second anniversary of her death.

"You could have gone to Abhaya's house today. You could have gone to Ratna Debnath with a towel around your neck and apologised, saying you had made a mistake and asking for forgiveness. I believe she would have forgiven you," he said.

Ratna Debnath, Abhaya's mother, is now a BJP MLA. She had earlier said she contested the elections to fight for justice and accused Banerjee of failing to save her daughter.

Adhikari also alleged that Banerjee had gone to Halisahar without being invited by the deceased worker's family and claimed that the kin was satisfied with the police and administration.

"Do not do this when the family is shutting the door. You are saying you will enter by force. Do it when people seek your help or intervention. This is the time for development. Do not go anywhere and do

anything that disrupts normal life," he said.

Reacting to the alleged pelting of mud at Banerjee's vehicle, Adhikari said, "You (Banerjee) killed Abhaya, went to destroy evidence and tried to buy her family with Rs 10 lakh. If people threw mud at your car, what else would they throw? Flowers?" Advertising & Marketing

BJP MLA from Bijpur seat, under which Halisahar falls, Sudipta Das also accused Banerjee of seeking political mileage from the death of the TMC worker.

"This is Mamata Banerjee's old politics. Just as a vulture looks for a carcass, she too looks for a death in West Bengal and tries to find a way to remain in the media. She has become politically irrelevant," Das said.

Das said he was ready to provide legal assistance to the family over the alleged custodial death.

The deceased, Birju Keot, husband of former Kanchrapara municipal councillor Jeni Sharma Keot, was arrested in connection with extortion and other charges. He was produced before a court on Friday and remanded in police custody for five days. His death was reported on Saturday.