

Congress questions PM's 'silence' in Ram temple donation case, demands full account of offerings

NEW DELHI, OCT 19: Upping the ante over the Ram temple donation theft case, the Congress on Monday questioned the "silence" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and asserted that it is the responsibility of the country's citizens to punish the "chanda chors blinded by the arrogance of power".

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh demanded that full accounting of offerings at the temple be made public, roles of all responsible persons investigated, and no official be spared accountability.

In a post in Hindi on X, Ramesh said, "Chanda chori, Aastha dhokha. Ram ke naam se satta paayi, chanda chori par chuppi chaayi". The BJP, which rose to power by invoking the name of Lord Ram, will meet its downfall due to the sin of this theft."

The special investigation team (SIT) was constituted in a manner that suited the very individuals accused, he alleged.

"The massive theft at the Lord Ram Temple in Ayodhya came to light on June 4, 2026. Nine days later, on June 13, 2026, the UP government-acting upon a request from the Trust-formed an SIT. On August 17, the Home Department submitted the final report to the same Trust; as expected, it granted a clean chit to Champat Rai and Anil Mishra," Ramesh said.

"The theft was captured on camera 105 times. Footage recorded between April 27 and June 5, 2026, shows staff members-tasked with counting the funds-hiding bundles of currency notes,"



he said.

Those responsible for the treasury issued the clean chit, and since the treasurer held responsibility for the funds, the most significant questions naturally fall upon him, he said.

"Saints in Ayodhya have pointed out that the treasurer, Govind Giri, ought to have been aware of the inflow and outflow of funds. Nevertheless, on July 7, he claimed that Champat Rai had no role in this scandal," he said.

Ramesh claimed that the extent of the theft remains hidden and to this day, the nation has not been informed about the total amount of money or the value of the precious items stolen.

"A preliminary report dated June 23 clearly indicated that oversight protocols were not being followed and that the control room was frequently left unattended. Why has there been no investigation into who else was involved or held responsible? How could the investigation be closed without ever disclosing the actual figures regarding the theft?" he said.

Low-level staff in jail, while those in high positions remain free, he said.

"An FIR was registered on June 25, and eight individuals involved in the counting process were arrested the following day; however, no former office-bearer of the Trust is named in the FIR. Why have there been no rigorous interrogations by the ED or CBI?" he said.

In Ayodhya, Lord Ram had signalled his displeasure by causing the BJP's defeat-a warning the party failed to grasp, allowing the theft of temple offerings to continue, the Congress leader said.

"One cannot expect the BJP government to investigate those linked to the Sangh Parivar who are involved in the theft of these offerings. Therefore, the Congress demands that the entire matter of the theft of offerings at the Lord Ram temple in Ayodhya be investigated in an independent, impartial, and transparent manner, under the supervision of the Supreme Court," he said. A full account of all offerings must be made public, the roles of all those responsible must be examined, and no official should be

shielded from accountability, Ramesh demanded.

"More than four and a half months have passed since the theft of donations at the Lord Ram temple in Ayodhya came to light, yet Chief Minister Ajay Singh Bisht and Prime Minister Narendra Modi remain silent," he said.

"It now rests with the citizens of this country to hold these individuals-who have stolen donations while blinded by the arrogance of power-accountable and ensure they are punished," Ramesh said.

Earlier this month, the Congress alleged that the likes of former general secretary of the Ram Temple trust Champat Rai were being shielded in the Ram temple donation theft probe and hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his "silence" on the issue, saying "arrogance of power is suicidal".

The opposition party had also asked why there was a 21-day delay in filing an FIR after a video regarding the stolen amount reached Rai on June 4.

Ramesh had asked whether the objective of the investigation was merely to catch petty thieves, or was it also to fix accountability for those under whose watch and patronage these events transpired.

The Congress has raised an array of questions about the investigation into the theft of donations at the Ram temple by the SIT and said only an impartial and transparent probe under the Supreme Court's supervision can reveal the truth.

The opposition party has also questioned Prime Minister Modi's silence on the issue, saying it implies that the thieves "enjoy his protection". (PTI)

3 Detained In Kota In Tiger Shroff Shooting Case, One Was In Touch With Bishnoi Gang Aide: Police

JAIPUR, OCT 19: Three people, including a minor, allegedly involved in the firing at actor Tiger Shroff were detained on Monday in Rajasthan's Kota city from the Pune-Jaipur Superfast Express, police said.

Kota Superintendent of Police (SP) Tejaswani Gautam said at a press conference that one of the accused was in touch with Anil Pandit, an alleged associate of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, which claimed responsibility for Sunday's attack in an unverified social media post.

The three suspects were picked up by Kota city police at the railway station in an operation that lasted around 15 minutes. Their plan was to flee to Nepal, police said.

Two of the accused have been identified as Ritik alias Roshan from Begusarai in Bihar and Rehan from Haryana's Sonapat. The third accused is a minor, SP Gautam said.

Preliminary questioning revealed that Anil Pandit was in contact with Rehan, she said.

The accused were travelling on the Pune-Jaipur train that reached Kota station at 10.17 am. Mumbai police shared inputs with Gautam, who immediately alerted the district special team. She formed different teams. The train was searched thoroughly and the three accused were caught in the general coach of the train, police said.

Anti-Gangster Task Force and Railway Protection Force personnel also assisted in the operation. The accused



were brought to the SP office, where primary questioning was done, Gautam said.

The suspects told police that they boarded the train after "executing the crime". They were planning to take a bus from Jaipur to Delhi and then cross the border to reach Nepal, the SP said.

No weapon was recovered from the suspects, she said. "A team from Mumbai Police has reached Kota and the suspects are being handed over to them," she said.

The suspects are detained at the moment and will be arrested once Mumbai Police takes them into custody.

Gautam said she would recommend rewards for the police personnel involved in the operation.

Three assailants opened fire at Shroff's car in Mumbai's Juhu area on Sunday

evening. The actor escaped unhurt, while his driver and another person were injured. Police said three rounds were fired at the "War" actor.

The Lawrence Bishnoi gang claimed responsibility for the attack, according to social media. However, the authenticity of the video is yet to be ascertained.

A viral video showed an assailant firing at the actor's car.

Earlier on Monday, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said he had spoken to Shroff and assured him that the incident would be taken seriously.

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde met Shroff at his residence in Mumbai's Bandra late Sunday night, enquired about the 36-year-old actor's health and reassured his

family of full security.

Speaking to reporters after meeting Shroff, Shinde said the time had come to uproot criminal networks once again, referring to the crackdown on gangs in the 1990s.

"It will be tit for tat, bullets for bullets," he said.

Mumbai Police registered a case of attempt to murder in connection with the incident and it was later transferred to the Crime Branch.

Born Jai Hemant Shroff on March 2, 1990, Shroff is one of Bollywood's premier action stars and martial artists, holding a 5th-degree black belt in Taekwondo.

He debuted with the film "Heropanti" in 2014 and cemented his status as an action hero with films like "Baaghi", "Baaghi 2" and the YRF Spy Universe hit "War". (Agencies)

Warming climate may change protein composition of wheat, study suggests

NEW DELHI, OCT 19: Higher levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere can significantly alter the protein composition of wheat, impacting not only baking quality but also the tolerability of wheat products, a new study has found.

Findings published in the journal Food Chemistry suggest that crop adaptation under climate change should focus not only on high yields but also on quality characteristics such as protein composition.

Researchers, led by the Leibniz Institute for Food Systems Biology at the Technical University of Munich in Germany, said that globally, carbon dioxide (CO2) levels have increased from 340 parts per million in 1980 to about 425 parts per million in 2024.

Wheat, one of the world's most important staple foods, will also grow under significantly higher CO2 concentrations in the future, which could go up to 600 parts per million by 2050, they said.

The team grew ten cultivated varieties of winter wheat under realistic growing and environmental conditions. They exposed some of



the plants to an elevated CO2 concentration (546 parts per million), while others grew under current CO2 conditions.

After harvest, the researchers analysed the composition of wheat proteins in the various grain samples using a high-resolution mass spectrometric method they developed themselves. Proteins such as amylase/trypsin-inhibitors, puroindolines, and gluten proteins, as well as celiac disease-active peptides, were focused on.

Overall, the content of amylase/trypsin-inhibitors increased under elevated CO2, conditions, while that of puroindolines, gluten proteins, and certain celiac dis-

ease-active peptides--which may be produced from gluten proteins during digestion--decreased. The increased levels of amylase/trypsin-inhibitors (ATIs) could negatively impact human health.

"However, the extent of these changes depended largely on the specific wheat cultivar," Sabrina Geisslitz, principal investigator and research associate at the Leibniz Institute, said.

"Our results also showed that the reduced concentration of gluten proteins was associated with poorer baking quality," Geisslitz said.

Katharina Scherf, head of the food biopolymer chemistry research group at the Leibniz Institute and profes-

sor of food biopolymer systems at the TUM School of Life Sciences, added, "The observed changes in amylase/trypsin-inhibitors and certain celiac disease-active peptides could also be relevant in the long term for wheat-related diseases. However, further studies are needed to clarify the actual biological and immunological significance of these differences."

The study's results underscore how important it is to identify and breed cultivated varieties of wheat that maintain high baking quality, even under increasing CO2 concentrations while containing as few potentially intolerable proteins as possible, the researchers said.

"Rising atmospheric CO2 concentrations may alter the protein composition of wheat and thereby affect grain quality," the authors wrote.

"The findings highlight the importance of identifying cultivars (cultivated variety) with low levels of ATI and celiac disease-active peptides while maintaining good baking quality under rising CO2," they said. (PTI)

Release pending incentives to medal-winning athletes: Anurag Thakur to Himachal govt

HAMIRPUR (HP), OCT 19: Hamirpur MP and former Union minister Anurag Thakur on Sunday urged the state government to release incentives pending since 2018 to medal-winning athletes of the state.

Distributing sports kits to 385 young athletes at the 'Khelega Himachal, Khilega Himachal' programme held at Bachat Bhawan here, he said it was unfortunate that medal-winners in the state had not received their incentives since 2018.

"The government has a responsibility to honour athletes who have brought laurels to the state and the country through their hard work, talent and dedication," he asserted.

Athletes should not be made to wait for years to receive incentives they are entitled to, he said, stressing that sports must be kept above politics and athletes should be provided with better facilities,



quality training and timely incentives.

Expressing concern over the state's sports infrastructure, Thakur said despite availability of resources, several areas still lack essential facilities such as indoor stadiums, synthetic tracks and other sports infrastructure.

He called upon the state government to address the shortage of playgrounds and ensure appointment of trained coaches across different sports disciplines. This, he said, would give talented

youngsters from rural areas equal opportunities to develop their skills and compete at higher levels.

The MP said efforts would be made to develop sports grounds at panchayats across Hamirpur district to promote sports at grassroots level. He appealed to panchayat representatives to facilitate the necessary certifications for construction of playgrounds wherever land is available.

Responding to a question about the creation of new

districts in Himachal Pradesh, Thakur said forming new districts solely for political gains would not be appropriate. Before any new district is created, adequate financial resources, staff, offices and essential administrative facilities must be ensured.

He pointed out that several existing blocks and subdivisions themselves lacked adequate facilities. The priority, therefore, should be to strengthen the existing administrative infrastructure, he said.

"Any expansion of administrative units must be guided by the objective of improving public convenience and delivering better services to citizens," he said.

Organised under the aegis of Nehru Yuva Kendra, the 'Khelega Himachal, Khilega Himachal' initiative aims to engage young people in sports, expand sports facilities in rural areas.

Sri Lanka's Colombo port to develop new logistics hub under PPP model after Chinese firm's exit

COLOMBO, OCT 19: Sri Lanka's Ports Authority on Monday decided to develop a new logistics hub at the Port of Colombo under a public-private partnership (PPP) model after a Chinese company withdrew from a proposed project, according to an official statement.

The Hong Kong-based China Merchants Port Holdings (CMPH), a state-owned port and logistics operator, said in a statement last week that it had withdrawn from the proposed USD 392 million logistics hub project.

The Sri Lanka Ports Au-

thority (SLPA) agreed to a settlement of USD 21.9 million following the cancellation of the project, the CMPH said.

The project, formally launched in 2023, was envisaged as a large-scale logistics complex offering warehousing facilities and was to be developed under a 50-year build-operate-transfer arrangement.

Sri Lanka granted it Strategic Development Project status in December 2023, making the project eligible for tax concessions, including exemptions from corporate income tax and dividend



taxes for 15 years.

However, delays and implementation difficulties prevented the project from progressing as planned.

"Notwithstanding the decision to discontinue the earlier joint venture, the Sri Lanka Ports Authority remains committed to developing modern logistics infrastructure within the Port of Colombo to meet the evolving requirements of international maritime trade and supply chains," the SLPA said on Monday.

Accordingly, the SLPA has decided to pursue an alternative development strategy through the es-

tablishment of a new logistics hub under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, through a competitive bidding process, with relevant approvals," it said.

PPP is a long-term contractual arrangement between a government agency and a private sector company to build, finance, and operate public infrastructure or services.

The proposed facility is part of the SLPA's efforts to expand logistics services at the port and strengthen Colombo's position as a maritime and logistics centre in South Asia. (PTI)