

Qutab Minar is 'Vishnu Stambh' build on a temple of Vishnu: VHP leader

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) Sunday claimed that the Qutab Minar was a 'Vishnu Stambh' before some of its portions were reconstructed by a Muslim ruler and renamed as Quwwat-ul-Islam.

VHP national spokesperson Vinod Bansal claimed that the 73-metre-high structure was built on a temple of lord Vishnu constructed during the times of a Hindu ruler.

"When the Muslim ruler came, some of its portions were reconstructed with the materials obtained after demolishing 27 Hindu-Jain temples, and renamed as Quwwat-ul-Islam (Might of Islam)," Bansal claimed, speaking to PTI.

He claimed that Muslim rulers made multiple efforts to rebuild some of the top floors that they had "damaged", but they could not restore it.

"One can see a clear difference in the structure of the first three floors of the tower and the remaining floors towards the top. These floors were superimposed by them as they (Muslim rulers) just wanted to showcase the dominance of Islam," he claimed. "It was actually a Vishnu Stambh built on a Vishnu temple. They (Muslim rulers) did not build it. Our (Hindu) rulers built it," he claimed.

The VHP on Saturday demanded that the government rebuild the ancient temples at the Qutab Minar complex and allow resumption of Hindu rituals and prayers there.

The demands came after a group of VHP leaders, including Bansal, visited the compound of the monument, which was designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1993.

National Monument Authority (NMA) chairman and BJP leader Tarun Vijay

had on Thursday said that Ganesha idols were placed "disrespectfully" in the Qutab Minar complex.

"The idols are currently placed at the most disrespectful place, upside down at the feet level of visitors. The idols should either be removed or placed respectfully inside the Qutub complex, he had told PTI.

Vijay also said that he had raised the issue with the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) over a year ago but was yet to receive a response to his letter.

VHP spokesperson Bansal said, "Tarun Vijay ji has raised the issue with the ASI... We hope that the government and its concerned departments do a serious pondering over the issue and restore the honour of the Hindu society."

When asked about the VHP's future course of action on the issue, he said the matter will be discussed by senior leaders and "if the

need arises, we may also consider taking a legal course of action."

According to the Delhi Tourism website, the Qutab Minar was built with materials obtained after demolishing 27 Hindu temples at the site after the defeat of Delhi's last Hindu kingdom.

The website states, "An inscription over its (Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque) eastern gate provocatively informs that it was built with material obtained from demolishing '27 Hindu temples.'"

An advisory body which carried out an evaluation of the monument for its inscription in 1992 had noted that the building of the Quwwat-ul-Islam congregational mosque had begun in 1192 by Qutbu'd-Din Aibak and completed in 1198, "using the demolished remains of Hindu temples", it said.

"It was enlarged by Iltutmish (1211-36 AD) and again by Alau'd-Din Khalji

(1296-1316 AD). The Qutb Minar was also begun by Qutbu'd-Din Aibak, in around 1202 and completed by his successor, Muhammad-bin-Sam," read the advisory body evaluation uploaded on the website of UNESCO world heritage sites. "It was damaged by lightning in 1326 and again in 1368 AD, and was repaired by the rulers of the day, Muhammad-bin-Tughluq (1325-51 AD) and Firuz Shah Tughluq (1351-88 AD). In 1503 AD Sikandar Lodi carried out some restoration and enlargement of the upper storeys," it notes.

The report also noted the iron pillar in the mosque compound was brought from elsewhere in India.

"It bears a 4th century AD Sanskrit inscription describing the exploits of a ruler named Chandra, believed to be the Gupta king Chandragupta II (375-413)," it says.

India emerging as one of the major destinations of VFX, animation: Union Minister

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

CHENNAI: Union Minister L Murugan on Sunday said India is poised to become one of the major destinations of animation and visual effects in the world as talents galore in the country.

Addressing an event here, the Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting said India was producing the highest number of films, providing "bread and butter" to millions of people in the country.

"Our government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi acknowledges the contribution of the film industry and has taken several policy decisions...", he said at the valedictory session of the two-day conference Dakshin -- South India Media and Entertainment Summit organised by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Southern Region.

"Our government has facilitated signing of co-production treaties among 15 countries for co-producing films with Indian film makers", he remarked without divulging the names of the countries.

He noted that India was one of the fastest growing media and entertainment markets in the world and there was an explosion of entertainment in various formats including silver screen, multiplexes, television screens, Direct to Home and OTTs.

Murugan pointed out that several south Indian films like 'Baahubali', 'Pushpa' and the recently released 'RRR' have received worldwide attention.

"In this era, content is King, and language is no barrier. There is huge opportunity, go and grab it. I will be happy to engage with you all to work collaboratively and collectively", he added.

Earlier, veteran actor and South India Artists

Association (SIAA) President Nasser urged the Union Minister to reduce the TDS (tax deducted at source) for film industry as several low budget film makers were affected.

"Of the 1,000 movies being made, only 100 are big budget films, while others are low budget. The TDS deducted earlier was 10 per cent and was reduced to 1.5 per cent but now it has been revised again to 10 per cent," he said seeking the intervention of the Union Minister.

Ace director and Film Employees Federation of South India (FEFSI), President RK Selvamani also demanded that the Centre accord industry status to the sector.

On the occasion, Double Oscar winner A R Rahman was honoured with the Icon award by Murugan. The award instituted by CII was presented to him for his contribution to the film and music industry.

Former MLA Surjit Singh Dhiman expelled from Congress for 'anti-party' activities

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

CHANDIGARH: Former Congress MLA Surjit Singh Dhiman was on Sunday expelled from the primary membership of the party for alleged anti-party activities in Punjab.

The action against Dhiman came hours after he reportedly questioned the appointment of Amrinder Singh Brar alias Raja Warring as the new chief of the Punjab Congress.

"Surjit Singh Dhiman, ex-MLA, is hereby expelled from the primary membership of the party for anti-party activities," said an order issued by senior Congress leader Harish Chaudhary, who is AICC in-charge of Punjab affairs.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi Saturday appointed

Warring as the party's new Punjab chief in place of Navjot Singh Sidhu, and former Rajya Sabha member Pratap Singh Bajwa as the Congress Legislature Party leader.

Sidhu was asked to tender his resignation after the party's debacle in the recent Assembly elections in Punjab.

Sonia Gandhi had also appointed former minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu as the Working President of Punjab Congress and SC leader Raj Kumar Chabbewal as deputy CLP leader in the state assembly.

The Congress received a drubbing in the Punjab assembly polls, winning only 18 seats, as the Aam Aadmi Party stormed to power bagging 92 of the 117 Assembly segments.

Prez inaugurates Madhavpur fair; says such events unite country socially, culturally

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

PORBANDAR: President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday inaugurated a five-day long fair at Madhavpur Ghed village in Gujarat's Porbandar district and said such fairs, festivals and pilgrimages have kept our vast country socially and culturally united since ancient times.

Since 2018, the Gujarat government and the Union Ministry of Culture has been organising this fair annually to celebrate the sacred union of Lord Krishna and Rukmini, the princess of what is the north-east part of the country today.

"The fair of Madhavpur Ghed and various functions organised on the occasion in several temples in Gujarat

and in many places in north-east India is a celebration of the country's cultural, spiritual and social unity," President Kovind said in his address, adding that the fair connects Gujarat with the north-east region.

"Through such events, people, especially the young generation, get a chance to gain knowledge about our heritage, culture, art, handicrafts and traditional cuisine. These events also encourage tourism," he added.

The President expressed hope the fair will have a special identity in the country's cultural tradition, and noted that the Union Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region was also associated in organis-

ing the fair on a larger scale this year, with many cultural festivals being organised in the north-eastern states on the same day.

"The folk story of Lord Krishna and Rukmini shows how ancient is India's cultural unity and how deep were the roots of our social harmony. Born in today's Uttar Pradesh, Shri Krishna makes Gujarat his workplace and marries Rukmini, a princess from today's north-eastern region of our country. According to folk belief, the land of Madhavpur Ghed village has been a witness to their union," the President said.

Kovind said Mahatma Gandhi had hoped to establish 'Ram Rajya', adding that it was his privilege that he had got to inaugurate the

fair in a village associated with the life of Lord Krishna near Porbandar, which is the birth place of Bapu.

He praised the enterprising people of Gujarat for keeping "balance between tradition and modernity while marching on the path of development," and quoted NITI Aayog's 2020-21 report that assessed the performance of various states in achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

"Gujarat has been ranked first in the country in terms of providing access to a healthy life to people of all age groups. Also, on parameters of inclusive development of industry, innovation and infrastructure, Gujarat's performance has been the best among all the states," he said.

Cooperative sector should try to raise India's milk production by tapping states having potential: Shah

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

AHMEDABAD: Union minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the dairy cooperative sector should take steps towards increasing the country's milk production by exploring possibilities in states possessing untapped potential.

Calling the milk cooperative sector as the secret of Gujarat's prosperity, he said there was a need to replicate this model across the country.

Shah urged the National Cooperative Dairy Federation of India (NCDFI) to explore the possibility of increasing milk production in states such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar - there are still a lot of possibilities that remain to be harnessed," he said.

The NCDFI should explore possibilities with the help of the governments in these states. After raising milk production by unlocking the possibilities in untapped states, the federation should also look at increasing exports of milk and dairy products at competitive rates, he said.

"We should bring down the milk production costs and increase the export of milk and dairy products," Shah said. At the same time, the NCDFI should work to help dairy farmers increase their income by helping them develop alternative sources through honey production and natural farming, he added.

Shah said that the dairy cooperative sector, founded

"There are still many regions with good availability of water and fertile land, which do not contribute much to the country's total milk production. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Bihar - there are still a lot of possibilities that remain to be harnessed," he said.

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Shah said that the dairy cooperative sector, founded

by Tribhuvandas Patel (the founder of Amul cooperative movement) and promoted by Dr Verghese Kurien, is the secret of Gujarat's prosperity."

"I want this to be replicated in all the states," he said.

He reiterated the need to promote natural farming so that India becomes capable of fulfilling the need of organic farming demand of the world and rejuvenate its economy.

He said his ministry is working on 'Rashtriya Sahakari Data Bank, under which all the cooperatives in the country will be streamlined.

Shah inaugurated the headquarters of Gujarat State Co-operative Marketing Federation Ltd. (GUJCOMASOL), the apex cooperative marketing federation engaged in agro input business, at state capital Gandhinagar. He also inaugurated the "model cooperative village" programme of NABARD and GSC Bank, in his Lok Sabha constituency of Gandhinagar.

SKM to observe 'MSP Guarantee Week' from today

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Samyukt Kisan Morcha will observe an 'MSP Guarantee Week' from April 11 to 17 to press its demand for a legal guarantee on minimum support price for farmers. During this week, farmer unions will hold dharnas, demonstrations and seminars across the country, the SKM said in a statement on Sunday. The programme was first announced on March 14. The SKM had spearheaded a year-long agitation against the Centre's three farm laws.

It had suspended the stir on December 9 last year after the government revoked the contentious laws and agreed to consider its six other demands, including withdrawal of cases registered against farmers during the agitation, a legal guarantee on MSP and compensation for kin of farmers who died during the protest. Between April 11 and 17, farmer organisations across the country will observe an 'MSP Guarantee Week' under the banner of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, the statement said. "Under this programme, public awareness campaigns will be held through dharnas, demonstrations and seminars at different places for the demand to make Minimum Support Price (MSP) a legal right of farmers," it said. Last year in November, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the repeal of the three farm laws and the formation of a committee on MSP and other issues, the statement said. "This was also mentioned in the assurance letter of the government dated December 9. But today, even after four months, the government has not constituted this committee.

"On March 22, the government had sent a verbal message to the Samyukt Kisan Morcha to give some names for the committee. But after the Morcha demanded a written explanation regarding the constitution of the committee, its chairmanship, its TOR (Terms of Reference) and tenure etc., the government has again maintained silence. Obviously, the intention of the government on this question is not clear," it said. The SKM also appealed to farmers and farm organisations across the country to organise at least one programme in their respective districts between April 11 and 17 so that preparations can be started for the nationwide movement on the question of MSP.

One-stop centres in NE to receive active support from Centre: Irani

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

GUWAHATI: Anganwadis and one-stop centres across the Northeast region will receive active support from the Centre to ensure that geographical and logistical challenges are met expeditiously, Union minister Smriti Irani said here on Sunday.

Speaking about the one-stop centres, the Union Women and Child Development Minister said that collaborated effort is taken up in those facilities where various branches of government come together to ensure that police, psycho-social and legal counsellors under one roof provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces in a phased manner.

Three hundred more such centres will be opened in the country, the minister said.

In the past three years, 70 lakh women have received support from the government in collaboration with women helplines across the country.

Chairing a zonal conference of all Northeastern states, she discussed various developmental schemes initiated by her

ministry.

Participants from Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Nagaland attended the event.

In her address, Irani also highlighted the details of 'Poshan Abhiyan' and other initiatives of the Ministry.

'Poshan Abhiyan' or the National Nutrition Mission is a Central government programme launched with the aim of reducing the levels of stunting, undernutrition, anaemia and low birth weight in children.

The minister said that improving nutrition among women and children has transformed into a 'Jan Andolan' (people's movement) today.

Praising the efforts of various stakeholders for their contribution, she said that addressing the issues of health and nutrition of women and children has been possible because of their cooperation and support.

On the other initiatives, Irani said that there are around 25 crore women benefiting from Jan-Dhan Yojana, while 68 per cent of the beneficiaries of Mudra Yojana are women and

80 per cent of the beneficiaries of Stand-Up India are women.

Union Minister of State for Women and Child Development Manjupara Mahendrabhai Kabbhai highlighted the three major umbrella schemes of the Ministry -- Mission Poshan, Mission Shakti and Mission Vatsalya.

Mission Shakti comprises policies and schemes for protection and empowerment of women such as one-stop centre, mahila police volunteer, women's helpline, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana.

The objective of Mission Vatsalya is to secure a healthy and happy childhood for every child in India, foster a sensitive, supportive and synchronised ecosystem for development of children, and assist States/UTs in delivering the mandate of the Juvenile Justice Act 2015.

Referring to the zonal conferences held in different states, he said that the Central government is focusing on empowerment of women through various schemes and the objective of these zonal conferences is to sensitise local governments on the three flagship schemes.

Gehlot targets Shekhawat over canal project, asks his 'standing' before PM

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

BIKANER: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Sunday mocked Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, asking if he has the "standing" to get the PM declare the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project a project of national importance.

He also accused the Union minister of being involved in an attempt to topple his government in the state two years ago.

"What kind of minister he is? Rajasthan is in misery despite him being the Union Jal Shakti Minister," Gehlot told reporters here.

If PM Narendra Modi did not utter a word on the project, people can expect from Shekhawat, who is also an MP from the state,

to get the ERCP the status of a project of national importance, Gehlot said.

"Doesn't he has this much standing," asked the CM, adding the ground water condition in 13 districts of the state is grim.

He said 16 projects of national importance are running in the country and another project won't affect much as it is a matter of only Rs 40,000 crore.

The canal project aims at harvesting surplus water available during the rainy season in southern Rajasthan rivers such as the Chambal and route this to 13 south-eastern districts that face scarcity of water for drinking and irrigation purposes.

On Friday, Shekhawat and state PHED Minister Mahesh Joshi had come

face to face over the project.

At an event in Jaipur, when Joshi said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised to give the initiative the status of the project of national importance, Shekhawat interrupted him, saying the PM never said this.

Shekhawat had dared Joshi to prove that the PM made the promise and said on being proved wrong, he would quit politics.

Gehlot also accused Shekhawat and Union Home Minister Amit Shah of the bid to topple the Congress government in Rajasthan two years ago.

Congress leader Sachin Pilot and 18 MLAs loyal to him had revolted against Gehlot, leading to a political crisis.

The BJP was accused of the bid to topple the Congress government.

For this reason, party leaders had to stay in hotels for 34 days, Gehlot said.

Apparently referring to a telephonic conversation allegedly about the toppling of the government in the state, Gehlot said Shekhawat is running away from giving his voice samples.

If he is not involved then why he is running away from giving his samples, asked Gehlot.

He said the man who played a "key role" in the bid to topple the government is in the line of becoming the chief minister of the state.

The chief minister also hit out at the BJP, saying the

party indulges in the politics of polarisation.

They don't have any achievement or issues, he said.

"These people (BJP) are looting the country," he said, adding that earlier the UPA government at the Centre controlled fuel prices.

Now instead of giving subsidy to these companies, the Centre is passing the burden to people by increasing the price everyday, he said.

Gehlot said the BJP dominates social media and people are being misled in the name of religion and caste.

Now, religion is dominating the political discourse and the BJP's "fascist approach is very bad", he said.

