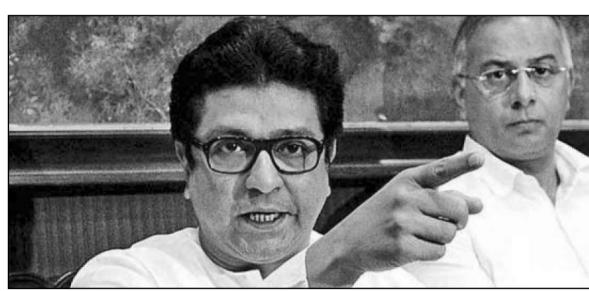


Play Hanuman Chalisa if you hear loudspeakers 'blaring Azaan': Raj Thackeray



■ STATE TIMES NEWS

MUMBAI: Undeterred by registration of a case against him, Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) president Raj Thackeray on Tuesday urged people to play the Hanuman Chalisa on loudspeakers on Wednesday wherever they hear loudspeakers "blaring azaan" (Islamic prayer call).

In an open letter, he asked people to lodge complaint with the police by dialling 100 if they are disturbed by the sound of 'azaan'.

"One must complain daily," the MNS leader said. "I appeal to all Hindus that tomorrow, the 4th of May, if you hear the loudspeaker blaring with azaan; in those places, play Hanuman Chalisa on loudspeakers. That's when they will realise the hindrance of these loudspeakers," Raj Thackeray said in the letter. All local

mandals and vigilant citizens should start a signature campaign over the issue of loudspeakers atop mosques and submit it to the police station in their locality, he said.

Thackeray had earlier given an ultimatum to the state government to remove loudspeakers from mosques by May 3.

Earlier in the day, the Aurangabad police registered a case against the MNS chief, days after he called for "silencing" loudspeakers atop mosques from May 4 while addressing a rally in the cen-

tral Maharashtra city, an official said. In the letter, Raj Thackeray also attacked the Shiv Sena-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, saying the ruling coalition stands feeble over the issue.

Invoking Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray, the MNS president drew Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's attention to a statement of the late leader - "all loudspeakers (rpt loudspeakers) need to be silenced".

"Are you going to listen to this or are you going to follow non-religious Sharad Pawar

who is responsible for keeping you in power? Let people of Maharashtra witness what is going to happen. Our country doesn't have so many jails that can arrest the Hindus of our country. This very fact should be recognised by all the governments," he said. The Sharad Pawar-led NCP is a key constituent of the MVA government.

The MNS chief claimed loudspeakers are "unauthorised" and so are many mosques. How is it possible that the government has authorised permissions to unauthorised masjids to use loudspeakers?

And if permissions are being granted, then Hindu temples need to be given permissions to play the loudspeakers, the MNS leader said. Maintaining that the issue of loudspeakers is not religious, but a social one, Raj Thackeray said people of

every religion are exposed to noise pollution. Which religion propagates assembling and sitting on the middle of the road to pray and cause immense traffic jams? This is main reason for my statements to the Muslim community that this is a social issue affecting the public. Kindly take cognisance of the same, he said. If steps are taken to turn this social issue into a religious one, then we, too, can give a befitting reply, Raj Thackeray warned.

He said issues like "unauthorised" mosques, loudspeakers and prayers being held on the middle of the roads need to be addressed duly.

"The Hindu festivals are restricted under the facade of schools and hospitals being around. However, mosques are exempt from such restrictions," he claimed.

82 lakh deaths in 2020 in India; 1.48 lakh due to COVID-19: RGI

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: As many as 81.2 lakh people died in India in 2020, an increase of 6.2 per cent than 2019 when the country had registered 76.4 lakh deaths, according to data prepared by the Registrar General of India (RGI). In 2020, when COVID-19 was first reported in the country, 1.48 lakh people lost their lives due to the pandemic, which is substantially lower than 2019 when 3.32 lakh people died due to the disease.

According to Union health ministry data, provided on Tuesday morning, 5,23,889 people have lost their lives to the virus in the country since early 2020.

In case of registered deaths, the number of registered events has gone up from 76.4 lakhs in 2019 to 81.2 lakhs in 2020, an increase of 6.2 per cent, the RGI's report 'Vital Statistics of India based on the Civil Registration System' for 2020 said.

Some states and union territories (UTs) namely Maharashtra, Bihar,

Gujarat, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam, and Haryana have contributed significantly in the increased number of deaths registered from 2019 to 2020.

Officials said many of the deaths had occurred in these states due to COVID-19.

Registered births, the data said, decreased from 2.48 crore in 2019 to 2.42 crore in 2020, a drop of about 2.4 per cent. In the case of registered births, there has been a fall in 2020 in almost all states and UTs except Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh compared to 2019. Eleven States and UTs namely Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Delhi, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Kerala and West Bengal have contributed significantly to the decrease in registered births in 2020 over 2019.

As many as 11 states and UTs have achieved more than 90 per cent registration of death within the prescribed time limit of 21 days.

Seven states and UTs are in the category of more than 80 to less than or equal to 90 per cent, seven states are in the category of more than 50 to less than or equal to 80 per cent, and the remaining eight states are under the category of less than or equal to 50 per cent in death registration within the prescribed time limit of 21 days.

A total of 15 states and UTs have achieved more than 90 per cent registration of births within the prescribed time limit of 21 days.

Further, two states and UTs are in the category of more than 80 to less than or equal to 90 per cent, nine states are in the category of more than 50 to less than or equal to 80 per cent and, the remaining seven states are under the category of less than or equal to 50 per cent in completing the birth registration within the time limit of 21 days.

During early hours, these youths, out of that grudge, tore apart some banners, posters and also broke a plaque on which Parshuram Chowk was written," said Deputy Commissioner of Police, Bhagirath Singh Jadeja.

After receiving a complaint from the organisers, police checked the CCTV footage and identified four miscreants, one of them a minor, said Jadeja.

Three of them were arrested, while the minor was detained and all four were booked under IPC section 295A (deliberate and malicious acts, intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs), the DCP added.

"When they were putting up banners in Chamunda Nagar part of Vasna, some local youths raised an objection as they did not want those banners near their locality.

Residents of Vasna had organised a 'maha aarti' at a temple to celebrate Lord Parshuram's birth anniversary and put up posters and banners announcing the same in the area on late Monday night, he said.

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