

BJP's Pragma Thakur Gets Notice For Babri Mosque Remark, Second In A Day

Courtesy - India Today
New Delhi:

Bharatiya Janata Party candidate Pragma Thakur has been issued a notice — her second in a day — for her controversial remarks to a television channel in which she appeared to have supported the demolition of Babri Masjid.

In an interview to AajTak, Pragma Thakur had said that she does not "regret" demolishing the Babri Masjid structure in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992. Pragma Thakur, who is a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate from Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal, also went on to say that she was "proud" of her decision.

"Why would we regret the demolition of the Babri Masjid? We are, in fact, proud of it. There were some waste products of the Ram temple and we removed it. This has awakened the self-respect of our country and we will construct a grand Ram temple," Pragma Thakur told AajTak.

She also claimed that by demolishing the Babri Masjid, the "Hindus have awakened the self-respect of the country". "Where will the Ram temple be constructed if not in this country?" she was quoted saying in the interview.

Three days ago, Pragma Thakur had claimed that 26/11 hero Hemant Karkare was killed in the 2008 terror attacks in Mumbai after she "cursed" him for "torturing" her during investigation in the Malegaon blast case.

"Hemant Karkare was anti-national. He was *dhararm virudh* (anti-religion). You won't believe this, but I said that he will be destroyed. Soon after, terrorists killed him," the politician, who is

contesting from Bhopal on a BJP ticket, said. She withdrew her controversial remark in the face of mounting criticism on Friday. She was also served a notice from the poll body for the controversial remarks on Saturday. A former public prosecutor in the Malegaon blast case also slammed the BJP leader for her remarks. Rohini Salian, the former public prosecutor in the case, clarified that the courts had found no evidence of torture on Pragma Thakur. "These remarks (against Hemant Karkare) are unwarranted and uncalled for. I feel she is doing this for publicity as she is contesting the polls. Unwanted commentaries of this sort are atrocious," she said.

Pragma Thakur, 48, is facing trial under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in the 2008 Malegaon blast case. She is currently out on bail in the case. Six people died in the blast at Malegaon, a communally sensitive town in North Maharashtra, on September 29, 2008, with the ATS claiming that it was the work of a group of Hindu extremists.

The BJP on Wednesday announced Pragma Thakur's candidature from the Bhopal Lok Sabha seat, where she would be facing senior Congress leader Digvijay Singh. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has defended the party decision, saying the her candidature from Bhopal was a symbolic answer to all those who falsely labeled the rich Hindu civilization as "terrorist" and asserted that "this symbol will prove costly for the Congress".



I'm proud of demolishing Babri Masjid: Sadhvi Pragma

Sadhvi Pragma Singh Thakur has said that she does not regret demolishing the Babri Masjid structure in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992. In fact, Sadhvi Pragma said, she is proud of it. Sadhvi Pragma, who is out on bail in the 2008 Malegaon blast case, is a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate from Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal.

In an exclusive interview with AajTak, Sadhvi Pragma said, "Why would we regret the demolition of the Babri Masjid? We are, in fact, proud of it. There were some waste products of the Ram temple and we removed it. This has awakened the self-respect of our country and we will construct a grand Ram temple."

On being asked why a grand Ram temple has not been constructed at the site where Babri Masjid was demolished, Sadhvi Pragma said that this is not a political issue for the Bharatiya Janata Party. "The Congress has ruled for 70 years and look what it has done. Even our temples were not secure. By gathering and demolishing the structure of the Babri Masjid, the Hindus have awakened the self-respect of the country. Where will the Ram temple be constructed if not in this country?" Sadhvi Pragma said.

On her candidature from Bhopal, she said, "The public is with me. My candidature has motivated them. Everyone is telling me that their confidence has doubled ever since my name was declared for the Lok Sabha election in Bhopal."

Sadhvi Pragma's remarks on the demolition of the Babri Masjid has come a day after she said that 26/11 Mumbai terror attack martyr Hemant Karkare was killed as she had cursed him for "falsely implicating her in the 2008 Malegaon blast case".

She had said, "Hemant Karkare falsely implicated me [in Malegaon blasts] and treated me very badly. I told him your entire dynasty will be erased. He died of his karma." She later apologised for her statement on Mumbai Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) chief late Hemant Karkare. She said that if her statement is strengthening her rivals then it is better for her to take her statement back.

The Election Commission also sought an explanation from Sadhvi Pragma for her comment on late IPS officer Hemant Karkare and issued her a notice under the model code of conduct.

49 killed, nearly 300 injured in Sri Lanka serial blasts on Easter Sunday

Agency
New Delhi April 21,

At least 49 people were killed and nearly 300 others were injured after multiple explosions rocked Colombo and other parts of Sri Lanka early on Sunday. The incident was reported during Easter mass service, while the place was crowded with worshippers, officials and police said.

According to police spokesman Ruwan Gunasekera, the blasts occurred at around 8.45 a.m. (local time) as the Easter Sunday masses were in progress. The blasts hit three high-end hotels and one church in Colombo, while two additional churches are targeted outside the capital, police said.

One of the blasts hit St Anthony's Church in Kochchikade of the capital, Colombo. "A bomb attack to our church, please come and help," read a Facebook post from St Sebastian's Church at Katuwapitiyua, in the Western coastal town of Negombo.

Meanwhile, External Affairs



Minister Sushma Swaraj took to Twitter and said the situation in Colombo is being monitored closely. "I am in constant touch with Indian High Commissioner in Colombo. We are keeping a close watch on the situation," the EAM wrote on Twitter.

An eyewitness, Alex Agileson, who was in the vicinity, said buildings in the surrounding area shook with the blast. He said a number of injured were carried in ambulances.

Information available on the official Twitter handle of Yudhanjaya Wijeratne said explosions have been reported at Cinnamon, Shangri-La, Kochchikade church. A total of six blasts at churches and hotels in Sri Lanka, news agency AFP reported. Sri Lankan security officials said they were checking for details. Police immediately rushed to both areas and sealed off the churches.

More State News

Assam Rifles commemorates Battle of Tengenoupal



IT News
Imphal, April 21,

As part of the ongoing celebrations of the Platinum Jubilee of the Battle of Imphal, 26 Sector Assam Rifles under the aegis of IGAR (South) organized an event at the Tengenoupal War Cemetery to commemorate the Battle of Tengenoupal which was attended by the village chiefs, veterans, religious leaders and special guest Mr. Rahul

Thapa, son of retired Rifleman Sarkidhan Thapa who fought as part of 4 Assam Rifles during the World War II. Wreath laying and homage was paid at the War Cemetery with a Guard of Honour and prayers were offered to the fallen heroes of WW II which was followed by the flagging in of the forty bikers from Royal Chandel Riders including Assam Rifles troops. The historic significance of

the Battle of Tengenoupal which once witnessed the fierce fighting between the Japanese and the British Army was emphasised upon by the officers of Tengenoupal Battalion. A cultural dance programme was hosted by the members of Tengenoupal Youth club and by the KampangKhullen War Dance Troupe to add colour to this glorious event which was concluded with refreshments and tea for all the attendees.

Campaigning for third phase of Lok Sabha elections ends this evening

Agency
New Delhi April 21,

Campaigning for the third phase of Lok Sabha elections ends this evening. 116 constituencies, spread over 13 States and two Union Territories, will go to polls in this phase on Tuesday.

Top leaders of various political parties are making last-ditch efforts to win the voters.

Senior BJP leader and Prime Minister Narendra Modi held rallies in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal yesterday. Addressing a public meeting at Forbesganj in Bihar, Mr Modi said, if the NDA government returns to power, corruption, dynastic politics, loot in the name of the poor and politics of caste and religion will stop. The Prime Minister will address a rally at Patan in Gujarat today.

BJP President Amit Shah held a roadshow at Bhadravathi in Karnataka, with party leaders BS Yeddyurappa and SM Krishna, and Congress' Siddaramaiah addressing rallies at different places.

Congress President Rahul Gandhi campaigned in Chhattisgarh and Bihar. Addressing a public meeting at Bilaspur in Chhattisgarh, Mr Gandhi said, if the Congress

party is voted to power, it will launch a surgical strike on poverty.

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra addressed poll campaigns at Wayanad in Kerala from where Mr Rahul Gandhi is contesting.

In Bihar, JD(U) President and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar held election meetings in Supaul and Madhepura, while in Uttar Pradesh, Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav, BSP Chief Mayawati and RLD President Ajit Singh addressed joint rallies at Rampur and Firozabad.

In the third phase, voting will take place for all 26 constituencies in Gujarat; 20 in Kerala; 14 each in Maharashtra and Karnataka; 10 in Uttar Pradesh; seven in Chhattisgarh; six in Odisha; five each in Bihar and West Bengal; four in Assam; two in Goa; one each in Jammu and Kashmir, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu and Tripura.

Meanwhile, electioneering is picking up for the fourth phase in which 71 constituencies across seven states will go to polls on the 29th of this month. Several leaders are addressing rallies at different places. Prime Minister Modi will hold public meetings in Rajasthan

and Gujarat, polling for all 26 Lok Sabha seats along with by-elections to four assembly seats will be held on Tuesday. Our correspondent reports that about 4 crore 47 lakh voters, including 2 crore 14 lakh women, are eligible to cast their votes.

Two Naxals killed in encounter with police in C'garh

Agency
Raipur, April 21,

Two Naxals were gunned down in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Sunday, the police said. The skirmish took place around 8 am at a forest in Pamed area when a joint team of the special anti-Naxal Greyhounds unit of Telangana and Chhattisgarh police was out on an operation along the interstate border. Deputy Inspector General (anti-Naxal operations) Sundarraj P told Agency.

Acting on specific intelligence, a team of the Greyhounds, Chhattisgarh

Police's Special Task Force (STF) and the district force had launched the anti-Naxal operations along the interstate border, located around 500 km from the state capital Raipur, he said.

When the security forces were cordoning off the forest area at Pamed, the gun-battle broke out, he said.

"After the guns fell silent, bodies of two ultras were recovered from the spot," the police official said.

A few weapons were also recovered from the spot, he said, adding more details were awaited as the search operation was still underway in the area.

Good Friday celebrated

IT News
Imphal, April 21,

In the Christian faith, Good Friday - the Friday before Easter Sunday marks the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the last day of the holy week, or Jesus' last week of earthly life. In a nonpareil display of omnism and consonance, Moltuk Battalion of 26 Sector Assam Rifles under the aegis of



a church ceremony in village church of Phaisanjang and Molcham village. People in and around the villages attended the function. The Company Commander of Phaisanjang and Molcham village along with persons from the Company attended

the discourse by the local pastor. This was followed by an interactive session and vote of thanks. The event culminated with tea and snacks for all. The initiative of Moltuk Battalion was praised and applauded by the villagers.