

Opposing Vande Mataram in Congress' blood, Nehru's song split caused partition: Amit Shah

NEW DELHI: Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday alleged that opposing 'Vande Mataram' is in the blood of the Congress and said had Jawaharlal Nehru not divided the song in two parts to begin appeasement, the partition of the country would not have taken place.

Initiating the debate in the Rajya Sabha to mark the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram, he slammed the Opposition for linking the debate on the national song with the upcoming West Bengal elections.

He said Vande Mataram was the "mantra" that awakened India's cultural nationalism, and remains as relevant today as it was during the freedom struggle.

He stressed that the song will remain relevant in the coming days as well, in taking the country towards Viksit Bharat.

Shah also attacked Congress for questioning the need for a debate on Vande Mataram, and accused first prime minister Jawaharlal



Nehru of "dividing" the poem and limiting it to merely two stanzas.

"When Vande Mataram completed 50 years in 1937, Jawaharlal Nehru ji divided it into two parts, and limited it to two stanzas," Shah said, triggering uproars from Opposition benches.

He said many like him believe that the nation would not have been partitioned if the hymn 'Vande Mataram' was not "divided into two", alleging that appeasement politics began ever since.

"That is where appease-

ment politics started... and that appeasement resulted in partition of the country. Many like me believe, if Vande Mataram was not divided into two due to appeasement politics, this nation would not have been partitioned," Shah said.

Targeting the Opposition, he said many members of the Congress were considering the discussion on Vande Mataram as a political manoeuvre or a weapon to divert attention from issues.

"We do not fear discussing issues. We do not boycott Par-

liament. If Parliament is not boycotted and allowed to function, then discussion on all issues will take place. We do not fear, nor do we have anything to hide. We are ready to discuss, be it any issue," he said.

He further added that when the song completed 100 years, the country was under Emergency when opposition leaders were jailed.

Shah also accused several Opposition leaders of not according respect to Vande Mataram when sung in Parliament and alleged that "the disrespect and insult toward Vande Mataram have run in the veins of leadership of the principal Opposition party ever since the freedom struggle and continues even today".

He alleged that the then prime minister imprisoned those who chanted Vande Mataram and imposed the Emergency.

"Look at the situation of the Congress party, which used to start its sessions with Vande Mataram, it was a mantra of the ►P11



PM Modi encourages SIH finalists

KOLKATA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday encouraged finalists of the Smart India Hackathon (SIH) 2025 Hardware, asking them to contribute to the country's progress through technology-driven solutions.

In a video message, Modi asked the young innovators to think boldly, work purposefully.

The final of the SIH is being held at IIT Kharagpur.

"You think boldly, work with a purpose and contribute to India's progress through technology-driven solutions," Modi said in the brief message streamed to the participants on a big screen. After the PM's ►P11

SMVDSB: Religious body run like a 'Govt of India enterprise'

Why J-K's most sacred Hindu shrine has least Sanatan representation?



Shivang Satya Gupta Editor-in-Chief

A growing nationwide debate has brought the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) under intense scrutiny, with devotees and civil society groups questioning whether Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine, one of country's holiest Hindu shrines is being governed through a bureaucratic lens rather than a religious one.

A detailed review of the Board's composition across its recent reconstitutions has revealed a striking absence of Sanatan representation, sparking concerns over whether the shrine's spiritual integrity is being overshadowed by administrative priorities.

For many, the controversy has reopened a larger question that has simmered for years:

How did a religious shrine board, created to preserve spiritual traditions and oversee a sacred pilgrimage, become an institution dominated by retired bureaucrats, technocrats and corporate figures?

The Shrine Board, established under law as a religious and charitable body, was designed to uphold the sanctity and cultural heritage of the revered pilgrimage.

However, an assessment of the current and recent governing bodies shows that 70% to 90% of nominated members have

secular backgrounds that primarily retired IAS or IPS officers, judges, technocrats, medical professionals and philanthropists.

Currently, only one of the nine members possesses recognised religious or spiritual credentials.

Equally significant is the complete lack of representation from— Dharmacharyas, Vedic Acharyas, Sanatan scholars and temple governance experts. This composition has triggered a core question that can the spiritual and cultural stewardship of a major Hindu pilgrimage be entrusted entirely to secular administrators?

Across its reconstitutions in 2019, 2022 and 2025, the Board has consistently lacked voices rooted in Sanatan religious traditions. Instead, it has leaned heavily toward individuals with corporate, administrative or judicial experience.

While these skill sets aid governance, devotees argue they do not fulfil the core requirement of understanding Dharmic values, sacred traditions or the ritualistic significance of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine. This gap, critics say, has led to decisions that often reflect administrative convenience rather than religious continuity.

Several major policy choices in the past decade including the conversion of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU) into a State University, the outsourcing of the Shrine Board hospital, the controversial MBBS seat allocations at SMVDIME, and large-scale investments in secular institutions—are being cited as evidence of a widening gap between the Board's statutory mandate and its evolving priorities.

Devotees now ask pointed questions that why does a Sanatan shrine board operate universities and medical institutions without Sanatan representation in its

governance? Why is the single spiritual voice on the Board overshadowed by technocrats? And how were long-term decisions approved without Dharmic consultation or cultural evaluation? These concerns have intensified after the recent uproar over MBBS admissions at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence (SMVDIME), which many say exposed structural gaps in oversight.

Interestingly, the Shrine Act clearly outlines the Board's mission: to manage, administer and preserve the Holy Shrine and its spiritual environment. However, the governance structure in practice with its heavy tilt toward retired officers and secular professionals has led to allegations that the Board increasingly resembles a government secretariat rather than a spiritual trust.

Devotees are now asking who, in this system, ensures Dharmic guidance, cultural continuity, spiritual protection and alignment with Sanatan values. The concern is not about individuals, but about the institutional architecture that sidelines traditional religious expertise.

The questions the public seeks answers to included: Why does SMVDSB not include proportional Sanatan religious representation? Why are Dharmacharyas and Vedic scholars absent from key decision-making roles? Why is the Board dominated by retired civil servants with no religious background? Who determined that shrine governance should mirror a bureaucratic secretariat? And how can decisions impacting millions of devotees be made without Dharmic consultation?

The large sections of the community now demand a corrective approach focused on the inclusion of Sanatan scholars and Dharmacharyas, representation of traditional ►P11

Fire & Fury Corps unveils high-tech 'Drone Node' to boost northern frontline readiness

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

LEH: In Ladakh's high-altitude frontier, the Fire & Fury Corps today unveiled a state-of-the-art Drone Training Node, giving a major technological edge to India's northern defences.

The newly launched facility is set to forge what the Army calls future-proof warriors—soldiers trained to master surveillance, target acquisition, reconnaissance missions and precision strike capabilities, all essential for the evolving challenges of modern warfare.

The Army has described the initiative as a game-changing force multiplier, designed to bring real-time intelligence and unmatched situational awareness to some of the world's most sensitive border zones. Equipped with advanced



simulators, all-weather UAV platforms and mission rehearsal systems tailored for extreme climates, the centre will allow troops to train for diverse operational scenarios,

from high-altitude navigation to rapid-response targeting.

The Fire & Fury Corps emphasised that innovation remains the strongest weapon in ►P11

Admn extends tenure of Col. Neema as Dir Sainik Welfare

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

LEH: The Administration of the Union Territory of Ladakh has extended the tenure of Colonel Lobzang Neema (Retd.) as Director, Sainik Welfare-cum-Secretary of the Rajya Sainik Board for another two years, effective from 15 December 2025.

The decision, issued under Order No. 111-Home of 2025, follows the guidelines of the Ministry of Defence's Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare and continues the provisions laid out in the earlier Government Order of December 2022.

The extension was approved after a series of official communications, including references from the Rajya Sainik Board.

The Home Department noted that the continuation of Col. Neema's tenure will be subject to satisfactory performance during the extended period.

The order, signed on behalf of the Administration of UT Ladakh, ensures ►P11

'Financial Institutions catalysts of socio-economic change in Ladakh'

Ladakh's future must be green, carbon-neutral: CS Kotwal

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

LEH: Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Kavinder Gupta underscored the transformative role of financial institutions in driving holistic and sustainable development, particularly in remote and challenging regions like Ladakh.

He said banks act as catalysts of socio-economic progress, enabling aspirations, entrepreneurship, and long-term community empowerment. "Expanding banking services forms the bedrock of true empower-



ment, enabling economic self-reliance and inclusive growth," he remarked.

The Lt Governor was speaking at the launch of the Focused Rural ►P11

Census will include question on reasons for migration: Govt

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI: The Census 2027 will also include questions related to the duration of stay at the current residence and the reason for migration, Lok Sabha was informed on Tuesday.

In a written reply, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said that in the Census information of every individual is collected at the place where they are found during the period of enumeration.

The minister was responding to a question from a member on whether any special ►P11

Secy Bhanu calls for community-driven excellence, early childhood foundation

LEH: In a significant step towards strengthening the education ecosystem in rural areas, Government Primary School Basgorong, Chuchot, has been formally upgraded to Ladakh Model School Chuchot.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by the Secretary, School Education Department, UT Ladakh, Bhanu Prabha, along with the Director, School Education, Tashi Dolma.

Secretary called for community-driven excellence and strong early childhood foundation. Prabha congratulated the school ►P11

Ladakh admn extends provisions of Sec 356 of BNSS to Proclaimed Individuals

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

LEH: The Administration of the Union Territory of Ladakh has formally issued a notification extending the provisions of Section 356 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 to individuals against whom a written proclamation has been published by any court under Section 84(1) of the same Act.

The order, released by the Home Department under S.O. 146, reinforces legal procedures for dealing with absconding or proclaimed offenders within the UT.

Exercising the powers granted under sub-section (8) of Section 356 of the

BNSS, the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh has approved the extension, thereby enabling authorities to take further action as prescribed under the law in cases where individuals evade court summons or legal processes.

Section 356 deals with measures relating to attachment, custody, or disposal of property of proclaimed persons, enhancing the state's ability to enforce judicial orders effectively.

The notification marks a significant administrative move aimed at strengthening legal enforcement across Ladakh by ensuring that those declared as proclaimed offenders cannot escape the consequences mandated un-

der the newly implemented criminal procedure framework.

This step aligns Ladakh's enforcement mechanisms with the broader mandate of the BNSS 2023, which replaced earlier criminal procedure provisions nationwide.

The order was issued by Dr. Pawan Kotwal, IAS, Chief Secretary and Administrative Secretary of the Home Department, underscoring the administration's commitment to ensuring compliance with the updated national legal system.

The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, is a new Indian law that replaces the old Code of Criminal Procedure ►P11

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