

'I will stand beside Yunus, come what may'

Bangladesh's army chief vowed to back the country's interim government "come what may" to help it complete key reforms after the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, so that elections could be held within the next 18 months. General Wakeruz-Zaman and his troops stood aside in early August amid raging student-led protests against Hasina, sealing the fate of the veteran politician who resigned after 15 years in power and fled to neighbouring India. In a rare media interview, Zaman told Reuters at his office in the capital Dhaka on Monday that the interim administration led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus had his full support and outlined a pathway to rid the military of political influence. "I will stand beside him. Come what may. So that he can accomplish his mission," Zaman, bespectacled and dressed in military fatigues, said of Yunus. The pioneer of the global microcredit movement, Yunus has promised to carry out essential reforms to the judiciary, police and financial institutions, paving the way to hold a free and fair election in the country of 170 million people. Following the reforms, Zaman - who took over as the army chief only weeks before Hasina's ouster - said a transition to democracy should be made between a year and a year-and-a-half, but underlined the need for patience. "If you ask me, then I will say that should be the time frame by which we should enter into a democratic process," he said. Bangladesh's main two political parties, Hasina's Awami League and its bitter rival Bangladesh Nationalist Party, had both previously called for elections to be held within three months of the interim government taking office in August. Yunus, the interim administration's chief adviser, and the army chief meet every week and have "very good relations",

Ex-AAP leader Prashant Bhushan's dig at Delhi CM Atishi



Former Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and Supreme Court lawyer Prashant Bhushan took a dig at Delhi chief minister Atishi saying that she might place Arvind Kejriwal's slippers on the CM's chair and claim that the slippers are running the government. Prashant Bhushan's response came after Atishi, who took charge as the eighth chief minister of the national capital, sat on a different chair leaving the seat used by her party chief Arvind Kejriwal vacant. "She might as well keep Kejriwal's slippers on the CM's chair & say that the slippers are running the government!" wrote Prashant Bhushan in a post on X (formerly Twitter). After taking charge, the newly appointed chief minister said just as Bharat placed Lord Ram's 'khadaun' (sandals) on the throne, she would lead the Delhi government for the next four months. "I have taken charge as the chief minister of Delhi today and accepted this responsibility. My feelings today are the same as Bharat's when Lord Ram went into exile for 14 years and Bharat had to manage the governance of Ayodhya," said Atishi. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva criticised Atishi's actions, saying, "This is a mockery of the Constitution. If she did not want to sit in the chair, why did she become the Chief Minister? Why did she take an oath? If she doesn't occupy the chair, who will work for Delhi? Electricity bills are skyrocketing; who will pay for drinking water?" He further urged Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders to stop ridiculing the Constitution, asserting that Atishi is disrespecting both constitutional norms and the position of the chief minister. He further said that AAP leaders are preoccupied with cleaning Kejriwal's image. "They are determined to portray Kejriwal as an idealist and her as helpless. This is not a masterstroke; it is playing with the public," Virendra Sachdeva added.

Chandrababu Naidu telling 'raw lies', Tirupati devotees shouldn't believe Andhra CM, says BJP's Subramanian Swamy

Amidst a controversy over the alleged presence of animal fat in 'prasadam' laddus distributed at the Tirumala Tirupati Temple in Andhra Pradesh, BJP leader Subramanian Swamy initiated a public interest litigation (PIL) before the Supreme Court. The senior leader sought an investigation by a Court-monitored committee into the matter that has snowballed into a major controversy. The former Rajya Sabha member claimed that the laddu row was politicized causing deep hurt to crores of worshippers of Tirupati Lord Venkateshwara. Meanwhile, a Telugu media reported that Subramanian Swamy came down heavily on TDP supremo and Andhra chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu for using the matter for political mileage. He minced no words in his criticism of the BJP ally, and went on to add that the TDP-led alliance will not complete its tenure in the state, Sakshi.com said in a report. Subramanian Swamy said devotees of Tirupati temple should not believe Chandrababu Naidu's words who is "telling raw lies". The Supreme Court should monitor the investigation so that the guilty are found and not the Special Investigation Team (SIT) formed by the Naidu government. "Devotees of Shrivari should not believe the words of

Chandrababu. Chandrababu committed a great sin by using Srivara for his political selfishness. Defeat is inevitable for Chandrababu who is spreading evil propaganda against Srivari. Chandrababu's government will not survive for five years," Sakshi.com quoted Swamy as telling them in an interview. "Chandrababu is telling raw lies. The investigation should be conducted under the supervision of the Supreme Court and not by the SIT appointed by Chandra babu. Who is guilty in this case should be found. This case should be decided in the court itself," he added. In the PIL, Swamy mentioned in the PIL that "certain individuals to make a political statement out of the" development. He requested the apex court to direct the Andhra Pradesh government to file a detailed report on the source and sampling of the ghee used for making the laddus. "In the light of the severe political rebuttal and also in the light of the aggravated sense of hurt in the minds of the crores of worshippers of Lord Venkateshwara, and a propaganda, completely insensitive to the nature of the present fact situation, by leaking to the media houses, the contents of a lab report, the Petitioner prays for a committee under the monitoring of this Court/or under a Retd. Judge of this Hon'ble Court to be formed", Live



Law quoted Swamy's petition as stating.

Animal fat in Tirumala laddus: The controversy

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's claim that animal fat was used in preparing Tirupati laddus during the previous YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led government in the southern state has triggered a massive political row. The YSR Congress Party has accused Naidu of indulging in "heinous allegations" for political gains and the ruling Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in the state circulating a laboratory report to back its claim. Two days later, on September 20, Tirumala Tirupati Devastha nams (TTD) Executive Officer J Shya zmla Rao told a press conference that lab tests had revealed the presence of animal fat and lard in the chosen samples and the board is in the process of blacklisting the contractor who supplied "adulterated" ghee.

At least 6 former TTD board members had BJP links, approved the now-controversial ghee supplier

As the dust settles down on the Tirupati laddu row in Andhra Pradesh, things seem to appear more clearly. After Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanam (TTD) Executive Officer categorically denied the use of adulterated ghee in preparing Sri Vari Laddu, contradicting Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's claims of "animal fat" use, the focus is now shifting to where and when things went awry, if at all as claimed.

The TDP-JSP-BJP coalition's NDA government in Andhra Pradesh has been lashing out at former Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy for "desecration" of Tirumala temple. Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan has undertaken an 11-day "penance to atone for sins" by the previous government. The same Pawan Kalyan on Monday, 23 September, said his government wasn't "blaming" Jagan. "As a former CM, he (Jagan) could have just said let the law take its course. There is no need for him to defend. We are not blaming him. We are saying the board constituted under him did this, they are responsible," Pawan Kalyan told reporters. SIT to probe Tirupati laddu row: Andhra CM TTD an autonomous body His statement, differentiating the TTD board from Jagan Mohan Reddy, comes barely a day after Nara Lokesh landed himself in a spot over Tirupati laddu blame game. In his bid to defend the two-month delay in making the July lab report on ghee sample public, Nara Lokesh said TTD was an autonomous institution and the chief minister's role was limited to appointing its board members. Supporters of YSRCP were quick to ask Lokesh why the same logic didn't apply when his party held YS Jagan responsible for the alleged irregularities. If TDP were to continue holding the former



TTD board responsible, it may have to extend the criticism to people linked to its ally, the BJP as well. Interestingly, the former TTD board comprised at least six members with links to BJP. The former TTD board - who the NDA government in Andhra is holding responsible for approving tenders to vendors who supplied subpar ghee - even had a BJP MLA from Karnataka as its member. Tirumala temple's rich history and significance of the iconic laddu 'prasadam'

BJP links with the TTD board

In August 2023, by order of then Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, 24 members were appointed to the TTD board. Among those appointed was BJP's MLA from Karnataka, SR Vishwanath. Another member, Krishna Moorthy Vaithiyanathan from Tamil Nadu is said to have been recommended to the board via the recommendation of a powerful union minister. Three more members - Amol Kale, Milind Keshav Narvekar, and Bora Saurabh from Maharashtra were recommended by the NDA government's top leaders from Shiv Sena (Shinde) and BJP. Another member, Dr Shankar from Tamil Nadu, a former BJP state unit office bearer is said to have been backed by another union minister. The links between these ex-members of the TTD board and BJP were extensively reported at the time of the

appointment. Behind Tirumala laddu row: Politics, blame game and a push to take over temples

Approval of AR Dairy as supplier

It was the TTD board, inclusive of members with BJP links, that approved the now-controversial AR Dairy from Tamil Nadu as a supplier for ghee. AR Dairy applied to participate in the TTD ghee auction for the very first time in November last year. Through the reverse auctioning process, AR Dairy won the bid quoting the lower price per litre of ghee. According to the TTD EO, the tenders were called on 12 March, 2024, and finalised on 8 May, 2024. The supply started on 15 May, 2024. AR Dairy sent its supplies in June and July. While six earlier consignments were tested, passed and accepted, four consignments in July were found to be adulterated which led to its rejection and return. Sources from TTD's Ghee committee told South First that they had warned the former TTD board against approving a supplier who had bid barely ₹320 per kg of ghee. At such low prices, the ghee committee members had warned that quality is most likely to be compromised. The board members seemingly pointed to rules that mandate accepting the lowest bidder to override the ghee committee's recommendations. The underlying justification was that the consignment could always be rejected if found to be subpar. Rejecting poor-quality supplies isn't new to TTD. Dozens of consignments have been returned in the past for failing to meet quality standards. Given that BJP-linked persons were also part of the TTD board that the Naidu government is now blaming for alleged irregularities, will NDA blame NDA is the question.

