

'Why only target Air India which faced unfortunate tragedy' SC junks PIL for safety audit

NEW DELHI, Aug 8: The Supreme Court on Friday refused to hear a plea to appoint a retired top court judge for examining Air India's safety practices among other aspects and asked the petitioner why target the airline that witnessed an "unfortunate tragedy".

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi told the petitioner in-person Narendera Kumar Goswami to withdraw his PIL and asked him to move the appropriate forum in case of grievances.

"Don't give the impression that you are playing with other airlines. Why target Air India only which recently witnessed an unfortunate tragedy? If you want some regulatory mechanism in place, then why did you not make other airlines as party in your petition? Why only Air India?" the bench asked Goswami, a lawyer.

The petitioner claimed to be a victim of "some unfortunate incident" with the air-



line.

Justice Kant then told him, "We also travel every week and know what is the status. There was a tragedy, a very unfortunate one. This is not a time to run down an airline."

Goswami in his PIL, which he filed in July, sought directions for constituting an independent committee, headed by a retired Supreme Court judge to examine Air India's safety practices, maintenance procedures,

General of Civil Aviation was sought to be directed to implement and enforce a transparent, publicly accessible reporting system for all aviation safety incidents, including a centralized database, ensuring compliance with the Aircraft Rules, 1937, and international best practices.

The PIL further sought a direction to Air India to provide compensation to the families of AI-171 crash victims in accordance with the Montreal Convention, 1999, and to offer ex-gratia payments or compensation to passengers of AI-143 for distress and inconvenience caused by the safety incident, as per applicable laws and industry standards.

The London-bound Air India flight, Boeing Dreamliner 787-8, with 242 passengers and crew on board, crashed moments after taking off from the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in Ahmedabad on the afternoon of June 12.

Rahul Gandhi Slams EC For Asking Affidavit Under Oath, Says He Has Taken Oath In Parliament

BENGALURU, AUG 8: Slamming the Election Commission for demanding an affidavit under oath from him, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday asserted that he has taken the oath inside the Parliament holding the Constitution and reiterated his allegation of vote theft.

Addressing the 'Vote Adhikar Rally' here, Gandhi alleged that the Election Commission and BJP colluded to steal the Lok Sabha election from people.

"The EC asks me to file an affidavit and give information under oath. I have taken oath inside the Parliament holding the Constitution," he said. Today when the people are questioning the Election Commission based on data he released, the EC has shut its website, he alleged.

The EC websites in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar have been shut down because they knew that if people started questioning based on data, then their entire structure would collapse, Gandhi alleged.

The top leader wanted his party-run government in Karnataka to investigate and act against the "crime of stealing election".



When we tried to find out, we learnt that 1 crore new voters cast their votes; 1 crore new voters who had never voted in the LS polls voted in the assembly election in Maharashtra."

The Congress leader claimed that such new votes went to the BJP, which pointed to "wrongdoings." Wherever such new voters cast their votes, the BJP won.

"The votes of our alliance did not reduce and we got exactly the same number of votes we had in the Lok Sabha election. The new voters went to the BJP in the Assembly election," he added.

The Congress leader said the data he and his party leaders extracted was evidence of a crime and it took six months to "dig out facts" when they had to rummage through a huge pile of papers.

Rahul claimed that in Karnataka, Congress surveys showed them winning 15 to 16 seats in the Lok Sabha election. "Our polling showed that we were ahead in 16 seats but we won nine seats. Then we started ques-

tioning. Did we really lose elections? We were demanding the EC a soft copy voter list but they were rejecting it. When we demanded video (recordings), they rejected it and changed the law. They said that they should destroy the video after 45 days," Gandhi said.

The top leader warned the EC that if it did not provide data, his party would carry out an exercise similar to what it had conducted in Mahadevapura Assembly constituency in Karnataka; by diving deep into 15 to 25 seats where the victory margin in the LS polls was just 35,000 or so.

"Neither can you cover up nor can you hide. You will have to face the opposition one day. Every officer and the election commissioner should understand this properly," he said warning officials who allegedly colluded with the BJP.

"In the last election, Modi and BJP leaders made an assault on the Constitution. Indian institutions were destroyed," he alleged.

He claimed: "I am telling

you with conviction and proof that the Lok Sabha election was also stolen."

If such officials thought that they could attack the Constitution and still escape, they must rethink. Taking action against them may take time, but they would be caught one by one.

"Mark my words, because if you attack the Constitution, then we will attack you."

Holding a copy of the Constitution, he said it has the ideology of thousands of years of history. "It has Mahatma Gandhi, Ambedkar, Nehru and Sardar Patel's voice resonates along with the sayings of Basavanna, Narayana Guru and Jyotiba Phule. Its foundation is one man one vote." Every Indian citizen has the right of one vote each.

Rahul alleged the BJP's ideology was against the spirit of the Constitution and that it had "stolen a government" in Karnataka by paying money, a reference to allegations of horse-trading against the Saffron party. (Agencies)

PM Modi's Claim Of Special Relationship With Trump Stands Totally Exposed: Cong

NEW DELHI, AUG 8: Amid reports that Pakistan Army chief Asim Munir is set to visit the US for the second time since the four-day conflict with India, the Congress on Friday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's claim of having a special relationship with US President Donald Trump "now stands totally exposed".

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "Field Marshal Asim Munir, whose incendiary and inflammatory remarks provided the immediate backdrop to the brutal terror attacks in Pahalgam on April 22, 2025, appears to be a favourite of the US." He was hosted to an unprecedented lunch on June 18, 2025, in Washington DC by President Trump, Ramesh pointed out.

"The Pakistan Army Chief



is soon going to America again to attend a farewell function for the retiring US Central Command Chief Gen. Michael Kurilla—the same General Kurilla who had on June 10, 2025, called Pakistan, in his own words, 'a phenomenal partner in counter-terrorism operations.' What a bizarre certificate this was," he said in a post on X.

"Prime Minister Modi has

tations with top American officials, his second trip to Washington since the four-day conflict with India, Dawn News reported.

In June, Munir travelled to the US on a rare five-day trip during which he attended a private luncheon with President Trump. That meeting culminated in Trump's announcement of enhanced US-Pakistan co-operation in various fields, including an oil deal.

After his meeting with Trump in June, Munir had held a comprehensive and candid exchange with senior scholars, analysts, policy experts, and representatives of leading international media outlets in Washington.

His visit to the US came weeks after the four-day conflict between India and Pakistan following the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack.

AgustaWestland: Court rejects Christian Michel's plea for release

NEW DELHI, AUG 8: A Delhi court has rejected the plea of alleged middleman Christian Michel James seeking release in the AgustaWestland VVIP chopper case on the grounds that he had undergone the maximum period of sentence of seven years for the purported offences.

In an order dated August 7, Special Judge Sanjay Jindal said, "Considering the allegations under Section 467 (forgery of valuable security, will etc.) of the IPC which entails life imprisonment, it cannot be said that the accused has already undergone the period of maximum punishment prescribed for the alleged offences." It said the question whether IPC section 467 was made out against James would be decided at the stage of framing of charges, and it cannot be said now that the offence cannot be attributed to him.

The court underlined that



various issues raised by Michel, including his release, have already been considered by the Supreme Court, Delhi High Court and the present court.

"It has been held in categorical terms that the plea of the accused that he is entitled to the benefit under Section 436A of CrPC cannot be accepted as besides the provisions of Sections 415 (mischievous) and 420 (cheating) read with 120 B (criminal conspiracy) of the IPC and section 8 (offence related to bribing a public servant) of

the Prevention of Corruption Act, the accused is alleged to have committed offence under Section 467 of the IPC which is punishable up to life imprisonment," the court said.

"The request of the accused Christian Michel James for his release under Section 436 A CrPC stands declined," it added.

Section 436 A of the erstwhile Code of Criminal Procedure deals with the maximum period for which an under-trial prisoner can be detained.

camping at the district headquarters in Uttarkashi for the past few days to keep a close eye on the ongoing rescue operations.

In a post on Facebook, he said, "Reviewed the relief and rescue operations going on in Dharali in Uttarkashi this morning."

With the help of Heli Seva, Mi-17 and Chinook helicopters, rescue operations are being carried out on a war footing since the morning and people are being brought back safely, he said.

Necessary guidelines have been given to the officials on the restoration of roads, communication, electricity

James was extradited from Dubai in December 2018 and was subsequently arrested by the CBI and the ED. He was granted bail in the CBI case by the Supreme Court on February 18 this year.

Two weeks later, he was granted bail in the ED case by the Delhi High Court.

Michel, however, has not furnished bail bonds and remains in Tihar prison, awaiting the renewal of his passport.

The CBI, in its chargesheet, claimed an estimated loss of 398.21 million euros (about Rs 2,666 crore) to the exchequer due to the deal that was signed on February 8, 2010, for the supply of VVIP choppers worth 556.262 million euros.

The ED chargesheet led against James in June 2016 alleged that he received 30 million euros (about Rs 225 crore) from AgustaWestland.

Trust in Zelenskyy is diminished even after reversal of law that fuelled anti-corruption protests

KYIV, AUG 8: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy quickly reversed course last month on a law that would have curbed the independence of the country's anti-corruption watchdogs after widespread protests that threatened the stability of his leadership for the first time since Russia's invasion.

It's unlikely that the damage to the president's image can be changed as easily.

Zelenskyy's reversal followed years of public discontent that simmered around his inner circle, some of whom have been accused of corruption. But Ukrainians have been largely deferential toward their president in wartime, trusting him to lead the fight against the Kremlin and even acquiescing in the suspension of some civil liberties.

The protests showed the limits of that goodwill after the public concluded that Zelenskyy's fast-tracking of the law was a step too far.

"People will support Zelenskyy in whatever he does as it relates to the war. But the previous level of trust "that he will carry out everything correctly, without outside interests, has been damaged," said Tetiana Shevchuk, a board member of the Ukrainian nonprofit Anti-Corruption Action Centre, which fights graft. Zelenskyy "will need to work hard to get it back."

A Gallup poll released Thursday found that about



two-thirds of Ukrainians approve of the way Zelenskyy is handling his job as president, down from 84 per cent in 2022. Another poll released Wednesday by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology found a similar pattern, with trust in Zelenskyy down from just before the war started and a sharp decrease since after the signing of the law.

Both polls were conducted in July and excluded adults living in regions of the country that were not controlled by Ukraine or were under entrenched Russian control.

The initial decision to sign the proposal hurt Zelenskyy's standing among Ukrainians, loyal lawmakers and Western allies, including one foreign minister who told The Associated Press that his willingness to backtrack on the law would help restore "lost trust."

Zelenskyy says bill was designed to root out Russian influence.

Zelenskyy sparked the outcry when he signed measures

to reduce the powers of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau, or NABU, and the Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office, or SAPO.

Zelenskyy said the initial bill was meant to root out Russian influence in those agencies, but he did not provide evidence to support the claim. The bill became a law so quickly that lawmakers said they barely had time to read it. For the Ukrainian people, patience wore thin.

From the outset of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, the public tolerated restrictions such as martial law and postponed elections. But critics also argued that the consolidation of the president's authority undermined the country's democratic institutions, along with the checks and balances necessary for transparency. Members of Zelenskyy's inner circle and the corruption allegations fuelled public resentment.

The resulting anti-corruption protests in July in Kyiv and other cities were among

Evacuation Of Pilgrims Underway In Disaster-Hit Uttarkashi, 80 More Rescued Safely

UTTARKASHI, Aug 8: Evacuation of stranded pilgrims from areas around the disaster-hit Dharali village continued on Friday, with authorities focusing on rescue and relief operations via air as the Gangotri National Highway and several rural motor roads are damaged at a number of points.

So far, 80 people have been brought safely to the ITBP's Matli helipad since the morning, an official said.

Advanced equipment required to dredge through the mounds of debris in Dharali in search of the missing are being flown to the spot with the help of IAF's Chinook

and Mi-17 helicopters and those of Uttarakhand Civil Aviation Authority.

Food supplies are also being sent to the affected areas in helicopters, officials said.

Rummaging through the debris in search of the missing is an uphill task as the rubble heaps at places are 50-60 feet high.

With roads breached at various points, the thrust is on air support both for the evacuation of the stranded people and transporting food supplies and other essentials to the affected areas, an NDRF official said.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has been

and food supply. "We are trying to evacuate all the affected people safely and restore normal life as soon as possible," he said.

He added that the central government is providing full cooperation for the rescue efforts. The chief minister has also decided to contribute an amount equal to a month of his salary towards disaster relief operations in Uttarkashi.

Dhami said the state government stands with the affected people at every step, and added that everyone should come together and help the victims in this difficult situation.