



Sikh Federation (UK)

Never flinch from performing righteous deeds

Eiffel Tower row raises wider questions over BAPS, women's equality and Indian government links

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The controversy over the exclusion of female Eiffel Tower staff from a private tour for a delegation from BAPS, a global Hindu organisation, has sparked serious concern and wider scrutiny of the organisation's treatment of women.

A delegation of around 100 people linked to the Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) visited the Eiffel Tower in Paris on Saturday, ahead of the consecration of the organisation's first major temple in Paris on Sunday. Narendra Modi, the Indian Prime Minister, addressed the gathering by video link.

The decision to replace female staff with male employees for the tour has been widely condemned in France and has prompted questions about whether the incident reflects a broader pattern of discrimination.

Dabinderjit Singh OBE, Chief Executive for Political Engagement at the Sikh Federation (UK), said:

"The investigation that has been launched must establish whether any pressure was applied to exclude female staff. If so, that would be completely unacceptable and heads should roll.

"The absence of women from the BAPS delegation has also intensified scrutiny of the organisation. While that alone does not prove discrimination, it has raised legitimate questions about the visibility, leadership and influence of women within BAPS."

Dabinderjit Singh added:

"A core principle of Sikh teaching for more than 550 years is the full spiritual and moral equality of women and men. Women and men are equal in dignity, spiritual worth, and the right to lead and serve.

"This issue goes beyond optics. It raises questions about whether women are genuinely represented in leadership and decision-making within the BAPS organisation.

"If women are denied real authority, real voice and real influence, then any claim to equality is hard to sustain."

The incident is likely to prompt further debate across the globe where BAPS are represented about its internal treatment of women, and the extent to which Western governments should scrutinise organisations closely associated with the Indian government.

ENDS

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