

Asharam Bapu forced to run as public anger spills over

A city observed a shutdown against the alleged shoddy probe into the deaths of two children at his ashram, protesters pelted stones and an anguished father burnt everything he touched during his three-minute visit -- religious guru Asharam Bapu was Friday forced to face the wrath of the people.

The unanswered questions over the deaths of Dipesh Praful Vaghela, 10, and his cousin Abhishek Shantilal Vaghela, 11, whose bodies were found in the riverbed near the Asharam Bapu Ashram on the outskirts of the city July 6 after they had been missing for two days have come to haunt the renowned guru.

On Friday, Asharam Bapu went to the house of Diptesh's father Praful Vaghela but was barely there for three minutes before he was booed away. He had to literally flee from the place when people tried to surround his car.

Vaghela, who has been observing 'maun vrat', or vow of silence, for the last four days to protest the deaths of his son and nephew, ordered that all the things Asharam Bapu had touched be burnt. Even the wooden mat he sat on was set ablaze.

The anger spilled over to other parts of the city, where civil society groups as well as the Gujarat Congress and the [Ahmedabad](#) Bar Association have called for a shutdown. Areas near the ashram like Ranip, Sabarmati and Nirnayanagar observed the shutdown.

Public buses and other vehicles were stopped about two kilometres away from the ashram, observing the occasion of Guru Purnima, a day dedicated to teachers. Pilgrims were hooted at as they walked towards the ashram.

Many buses were deflated and stone-throwing was reported despite police presence.

Vaghela has alleged that the two boys were killed and thrown into the river after some esoteric ritual at the ashram. Police are yet to search a cellar in the ashram which is studiously guarded by white robed men.

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