

# Secure *Shivling* area in Gyanvapi mosque: SC

Court orders no impediments for Muslims offering *namaz*

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The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the District Magistrate of Varanasi to ensure the protection of the area where a *Shivling* was reported to be found, while ordering that Muslims should not be restricted or impeded from accessing the Gyanvapi mosque to offer *namaz* or perform religious observances.

“We are not disturbing anything but holding everything in balance,” Justice D.Y. Chandrachud addressed the court after passing the interim order.

“This is a situation when everybody must cooperate,” said Justice P.S. Narasimha, the pusine judge, who also spoke from the Bench.

The court, in order to “obviate any dispute”, “restricted” a May 16 order of the trial judge, which led to the sealing of a portion of the mosque premises.

“We are balancing the reliefs till the next date of hearing... The District Magistrate will ensure that the place where the *Shivling* has been found will be protected, but this will not in any way restrict or impede the access of Muslims to the mosque for purpose of *namaz* or prayers as before,” Justice Chandrachud observed.



**Under watch:** Security personnel standing guard outside the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, on Tuesday. ■ PTI

The trial judge had on May 16 “allowed” an application filed by several Hindu women claiming that a *Shivling* had been found near the *wazu khana* (place of ablution) during the inspection of the mosque premises by a Court Commission. The women had wanted the trial court to direct the local Central Reserve Police Force

(CRPF) Commandant to seal the *wazu khana* and stop its use with immediate effect. The women’s application had also sought the trial judge to order the District Magistrate to restrict entry of Muslims for *namaz* and not allow more than 20 of them to offer *namaz*.

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