

Cong, SP trying to undermine quota for SCs, STs, OBCs by 'diverting' it to minorities: Adityanath

STATE TIMES NEWS
MAINPURI (UP): Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday accused the Congress and the Samajwadi Party of trying to drag India back to "slavery" by "diverting" reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs to the minorities.

"The SP-Congress alliance is part of a conspiracy aimed at dragging India back to slavery."

These individuals are plotting to undermine the reservation for the Scheduled Castes, tribals, and backward castes, diverting it to the minorities," Adityanath was quoted as saying in a



press note.

The Uttar Pradesh chief minister made the remark at a roadshow in support of BJP candidate Jaiveer Singh in Mainpuri, an SP bastion, where he was showered with flowers from people standing atop bulldozers

amid echoes of 'Bharat Mata ki Jai'.

The BJP government in Uttar Pradesh has used bulldozers to raze buildings owned by "criminals", and the machine is projected as a "symbol" of law and order.

Braving the scorching heat, the people of Mainpuri thronged the streets to welcome Adityanath, the press note added.

Several bulldozers, stretching from the Arya Samaj complex to the Bhavant intersection, lined the roads during the roadshow.

The chief minister cautioned against supporting the INDIA bloc, equating it to tampering with the "faith of India".

"A genuine patriot, who holds faith in high regard, will never permit such an agenda to prosper," he said.

Adityanath said the entire life of former chief minister Kalyan Singh

was devoted to Shri Ram and the progress of the state.

"The SP failed to offer even a single word of condolence on his demise. I personally visited Mulayam Singh's residence following his death. PM Modi extended his condolences as well."

"The Samajwadi Party, which is focused on family interests, insulted Kalyan Singh and disrespected the faith. They should face consequences for their alliance with the Congress," he said.

SP candidate Dimple Yadav is contesting from the seat which will get to polls in the third phase on May 7.

LS polls: Only Sangli candidate announced without consultations, admits Sharad Pawar

STATE TIMES NEWS

KOLHAPUR: Nationalist Congress Party (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Thursday admitted the candidate for Sangli Lok Sabha seat was announced without consultation between constituents of the Maha Vikas Aghadi.

The Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) had announced the name of wrestler Chandraraj Patil as its candidate from Sangli even as MVA ally Congress was keen to contest. The decision led to friction between the two parties, resulting in Congress' Vishal Patil contesting as an Independent.

Queried about merit not being followed during seat sharing discussions in the MVA, Pawar told reporters "Sangli is an exception where the decision was announced



without discussions".

He said he found out from television about the announcement (of Chandraraj Patil's candidature).

On being asked if the situation can be rectified since a three-corner fight would only benefit the ruling BJP, Pawar said, "Now that a decision has been taken, let's face

the situation. Let the people decide."

Lok Sabha polls will be held on May 7 in Sangli, where sitting BJP MP Sanjaykaka Patil will take on Shiv Sena (UBT) candidate Chandraraj Patil and Independent Vishal Patil.

The MVA comprises the Shiv Sena (UBT), the NCP(SP) and the Congress.

EC directs parties to stop registering voters for beneficiary schemes under guise of surveys

STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Election Commission Thursday said it has taken a "serious view" of political parties and candidates seeking details of voters under the guise of various surveys for their proposed beneficiary schemes as it amounts to a corrupt practice under election law.

The poll authority noted that some political parties and candidates have been engaging in activities that blur the lines between legitimate surveys and partisan efforts to register individuals for post-election beneficiary-oriented schemes.

The Election Commission issued an advisory to all nation-

al and state political parties to immediately cease and desist from any activities that involve registering people for post-election beneficiary-oriented schemes through any advertisement, survey or mobile application.

It said the act of inviting or calling upon individual electors to register for post-election benefits may create an impression of the requirement of one-to-one transactional relationship between the elector and the proposed benefit, and has the potential to generate a quid pro quo arrangement for voting in a particular way, thereby leading to inducement.

India to train 1,500 bureaucrats of Bangladesh in next five years

STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: India will train 1,500 civil servants of Bangladesh by conducting mid-career capacity building programmes on good governance initiatives in the next five years, a top government official said on Thursday.

A letter for extension of an existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in this regard by another five years will be exchanged soon, said V Srinivas, Secretary of the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG). The consensus

on extension of the existing agreement was reached during the visit of an Indian delegation -- headed by Srinivas - to Bangladesh from April 28-30.

"The two sides agreed on renewal of the existing MoU, which envisages capacity building programmes for 1,500 Bangladesh civil service officers at India's National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG) from 2025 to 2030," Srinivas told PTI here.

The programmes for middle and senior management covers new paradigms of governance like project management, public

procurement, blue economy and food processing, among others, he said.

He said that the MoU envisages 14 programmes for senior executives and 32 programmes for those at middle management.

The NCGG and the Bangladesh Ministry of Public Administration have collaborated for conducting capacity building programmes for Bangladeshi civil servants since 2014.

Under the bilateral collaboration, 71 capacity building programmes were held and 2,600 Bangladeshi civil servants have visited the NCGG since the collabora-

tion started, Srinivas added.

The Bangladesh government has emphasised on the utility of these training programmes and conveyed interest in renewal of the MoU under which these training programmes are being organised for the next five years, when it expires in 2025, he said.

For the year 2024-25, 12 mid-career capacity building programmes including two for deputy commissioners, have been planned to cover 400 Bangladeshi civil service officers, said Srinivas, a 1989-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of

Rajasthan cadre.

India's governance model of 'maximum governance-minimum government' by bringing citizens and government closer using technology focuses on digital empowerment of citizens and digital transformation of institutions were presented in NCGG's capacity building programmes in field administration for Bangladesh civil service officers during the visit, he said.

India's administrative reforms focused on recognising meritocracy, benchmarking governance, effective redressal of public

grievances, secretariat reforms with focus on e-office, special campaigns to institutionalise 'swachhata' and reducing pendency, zero tolerance to corruption, and improving service delivery were also highlighted by the delegation during the visit, Srinivas said.

The visit of the four-member DARPG delegation to Bangladesh was undertaken on the invitation of the Bangladesh Ministry of Public Administration with focus on the mid-career capacity building programmes in field administration for Bangladeshi civil servants, he said.

With export of oranges squeezed, Nagpur region farmers pin their hope on pulp

STATE TIMES NEWS

KATOL (MAHARASHTRA): In the baking-hot fields of central India around Nagpur, onion has hit orange hard in a mini-trade war whose battle lines were drawn thousands of miles away. Caught in the crossfire, cotton too has become a casualty. Thousands of farmers in Maharashtra's Vidarbha region, famous for its oranges, are sitting on a surplus of the fruit, unable to sell it in its main export market, Bangladesh, because of a complex web of conflicting foreign trade policies, market forces and international trade dependencies.

Orange growers used to send 6,000 tonnes of the fruit daily to Bangladesh until last year, but that trade reduced to a trickle after Dhaka increased its import duty on oranges from Rs 20 per kilogram in 2019 to Rs 88 per kilogram in November 2023. This raised the price of oranges in Bangladesh, making it uneconomical for local traders to buy from India.

"We barely send 100 tonnes or five truckloads of oranges per day now," Manoj Jawanjil, president of the Nagpuri Santra Farmers Producer Company, told PTI, as he walked through rows of orange trees in his orchard, about 60 kilometres west of Nagpur.

Farmers in Vidarbha believe that Bangladesh increased the import duty in retaliation after India banned the export of onion, a staple of local cuisine, to protect the domestic market. The ripple effect showed how intricately linked is global trade,

where one action can impact tens of thousands of lives across a continent.

Late last month, the government relaxed the export ban on onions, which was imposed in December last year, allowing its shipments to Bangladesh, UAE, Bhutan, Bahrain, Mauritius and Sri Lanka. It is not clear if onion exports, particularly to Bangladesh, will lead to its government reducing the import tax on oranges.

If it does, farmers from Maharashtra, the largest producer of oranges in the country, will get some relief for the next harvest in December. Farmers say Nagpuri oranges are a must for Bangladeshis after every meal because its juicy fibre has the right Ph value to soothe the gut after consuming a meat heavy diet that is common in that country. In the tit-for-tat trade fight, it's not just oranges that have suffered.

The fluctuation in prices of cotton has also hit farmers of Vidarbha, so rich in the crop that the British colonial rulers set up a railway network in the late 19th century in the region solely to transport cotton bales to Bombay, for shipping onward to the textile mills of Manchester. "I still have 130 quintals of cotton from last year's harvest. I could have sold it then for Rs 8,500 per quintal. I held back hoping the price will go up, but the opposite happened," Manoj Khutate, a progressive farmer, told PTI, sitting under the shade of a massive tree on the edge of his friend

Jawanjal's 40-acre orange orchard.

Khutate's worry is that cotton cannot be stored long as it starts yellowing with time, and the quality degrades. Currently, cotton prices are in the range of Rs 7,100-7,300 per quintal, which according to farmers does not cover the cost of cultivation.

"If EXIM policies are good, then the youth will be attracted to farming," said the blue jeans clad Jawanjal, who co-owns the farm with his brother.

The idyllic surroundings of the tranquil, neatly laid out farm with its clean air attracted Jawanjal's nephew, Apurva, a trained mechanical engineer, to give up a job in Bengaluru and return to Katol to work in the family business.

With export at a near standstill, Apurva said the family is now dependent entirely on the nearby markets in Warud and Anuravati to sell the produce from the orange trees in the orchard. He said farmers were selling oranges at a loss of Rs 10-20 per kg when compared with the cost of production.

"There is a huge difference in prices when we used to send oranges to Bangladesh and now. Things were smooth earlier," said Apurva.

"Inki aayaat-niryat neetiyan ki wajah se kisaan lamba ho gaya hai (the export-import policies have hit the farmers hard)," Jawanjal said.

Apurva and his friend Indrajeet Ingle who also quit an engineering job in Pune to join his family farm near here are now banking on pulp factories

to save them. One such factory is in Nanded, about 400 km from here, which uses orange peels to make oil and its pulp to make pectin, which has medicinal properties.

The company has a crushing capacity of 400 tonnes of oranges per day and has helped farmers offset some losses caused due to the virtual shutting down of Bangladesh markets for their produce.

The farmers are also pinning their hopes on a food processing plant, which is planned to come up at the Multimodal International Cargo Hub and Airport at Nagpur (MIHAN), a multi-product special economic zone. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal acknowledged in the Lok Sabha in December that the increase in import duty rates by Bangladesh has affected India's export of oranges, as the neighbouring nation is a major export destination for the citrus fruit.

Goyal said India had requested Bangladesh to revisit the policy in the interest of the orange farmers in India, only to be told that it was applicable for imports from all countries without discrimination.

Several farmers PTI spoke to in the region said they have raised these issues with the political leadership, but to no avail. They indicated that the crisis could have an impact on their vote in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

"We did not favour the Congress last time. Had their policies been good, farmers would not have committed sui-

cide here. But the condition of the farmers is much worse now," Khutate said.

He said many farmers are now wondering if it is worth voting for the Mahayuti alliance of the BJP, Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena and Ajit Pawar's Nationalist Congress Party. Vidarbha region accounts for nine Lok Sabha seats, excluding the urban seat of Nagpur city where Union Minister Nitin Gadkari has a stronghold.

Katol is part of Ramtek parliamentary constituency where BJP ally Shiv Sena has fielded Raju Parwe against Shyam Barve of Congress. It voted in the first phase on April 19.

Historically, China has been the largest buyer of Indian cotton yarn. But Bangladesh took its place and became the largest importer of Indian cotton yarn over the past two years. Earlier this year, the government slashed import duty on cotton, allowing the textile industry to buy extra-long staple cotton from abroad.

"When there was a nominal increase in cotton prices, the government encouraged import of cotton. When our farmer is producing cotton big time, then why pay foreign farmers," Jawanjal said.

He said a similar approach was adopted when onion prices started rising domestically. To bring down the prices, the government stopped the export of onions.

"To please 20 per cent consumers, the government bans export of onions, a move that directly hit us," Jawanjal said.

STATE TIMES NEWS

BAREILLY (UP): Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday attacked Rahul Gandhi, saying he started his party's campaign with Bharat Jodo Yatra that will end with a 'Congress Dhoondho Yatra,' suggesting that the party will get a severe drubbing in the Lok Sabha elections.

Addressing an election rally here, Shah alleged that Rahul, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and SP's Akhilesh Yadav did not attend the Ram Temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya fearing this may alienate their vote bank.

"The 'shehzade' (prince) of 'ghamandia' INDI Alliance started his election campaign with Bharat Jodo Yatra but on June 4 (counting day), it will end with a 'Congress Dhoondho Yatra'," Shah said.

"In the first two phases, Congress is nowhere, while Narendra Modi has made a century and taken a lead in the '400 race' (race to 400 seats)," he said.

He said that this election is for ending terrorism and Naxalism and making India the third major economy globally. Shah hit out at the INDIA bloc partner Samajwadi Party, saying it indulges in dynastic politics, for its president Akhilesh Yadav has given tickets to five members of his family in the current

election.

He said that while Akhilesh is contesting from Kannauj and his wife Dimple Yadav is in fray from Mainpuri, Akshay Yadav, Aditya Yadav, and Dharmendra Yadav, all three his family members, are contenders from Firozabad, Budaun, and Azamgarh.

"Had he given a ticket to some Yadav youths, it would have been better," he said.

Shah said that for the past 70 years, Congress was stalling the Ram Temple construction, a task completed by the BJP.

"When you made Modi PM for the second time, within five years, we won the case, did the groundbreaking, and performed the consecration ceremony of the temple on January 22. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Dimple, Rahul and Priyanka, all were invited by the temple trust but they did not attend the consecration ceremony ... because of the fear of their vote bank," Shah said.

"You all know who their vote bank is," he added.

On revoking Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir, he said, "Congress president asks what do people of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have to do with Kashmir. He doesn't know that for Kashmir, every child of Bareilly can sacri-

fice his lives ... In Kashmir, our tricolour is flying with pride."

On the "surgical strike" after Pulwama attack, Shah said that under the past Congress governments, there was no reprisal for such acts and anyone could enter the country and do bomb blasts. "We did a surgical strike inside Pakistan to get rid of terrorists."

He praised the Narendra Modi government's successful Covid vaccination of 130 crore people.

Shah claimed that Uttar Pradesh was riven with communal riots till 2017, when Yogi Adityanath came to power and made it riot-free and stopped residents' exodus from western UP.

"In Yogi's regime, it is the hooligans who are migrating," he said.

In Samajwadi Party's UP, factories prepared country-made pistols, but now they manufacture tanks and missiles that will be fired on Pakistan, he said.

Claiming that the Opposition's INDIA bloc is torn with internal differences, he said, "Akhilesh wants to become chief minister. Sonia ji wants his son (Rahul Gandhi) to become prime minister. Those who are working to make their family members PM and CM, can they think of poor welfare?"

Bareilly will go to poll in the third phase on May 7.

HC refuses to entertain plea to form panel to check feasibility of 4-year law course instead of 5-yr

STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Thursday refused to entertain a plea seeking a direction to the Centre to constitute a legal education commission to ascertain the feasibility of a four-year law course after Class 12, instead of the existing five-year course.

The high court said since it is not within the judiciary's domain, it is not inclined to interfere in the matter.

"This is not in our domain. We do not design courses. We are not going to get into this. You cannot run down the five-year law course like this. If you want to give representation to them (authorities), you are free to do that. The matter is closed at

our end," a bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet P S Arora said.

As the bench indicated that it was going to dismiss the plea, petitioner Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, a lawyer, sought liberty to withdraw it and the request was allowed by the court.

The petition had sought a direction to the Centre to constitute a legal education commission, like the Medical Education Commission, comprising retired judges, law professors and lawyers to ascertain the feasibility of a four-year bachelor of law course like the four-year B.Tech course.

In the alternative, the petitioner had urged the court to

direct the Bar Council of India (BCI) to form an expert committee of retired judges, jurists and educationists to examine the coherence of the five-year bachelor of law course with the National Education Policy, 2020.

The BCI's counsel submitted that the petitioner had earlier filed a similar plea before the Supreme Court and after the apex court refused to entertain it, he approached the high court.

When the petitioner said law students are being made to study subjects like sociology, history and economics, which are not required, Justice Manmohan said these subjects are very much relevant and law students

must study those.

"If one has to practise law, he has to dabble in everything. He has to do income-tax cases also. How can you say economics does not have a role? We do all these GST and other matters every day. I wish I had studied economics. It would have helped in understanding these cases better."

Engineering is also important. Now, people are doing engineering with law," Justice Manmohan said.

The court also said there was a "certain bit of lack of knowledge" on the petitioner's part that had led to the filing of the petition.

The petitioner said earlier, there was a three-year law course and cited the example

of former law minister Ram Jethmalani and eminent jurist and former attorney general late Fali Nariman, saying they started practising law at the age of just 17 and 21 years respectively.

To this, the bench said, "Let us tell you, their education never came to an end. How much they have read even at that age. They were continuously reading and updating themselves. Nobody does that."

The plea said if there is a need for a five-year bachelor of law course, only subjects related to law should be taught.

"NLU, Nagpur conducts 50 examinations in five years. Out of these, only 33 are law-related examina-

tions and the rest 17 irrelevant examinations, that is, economics, sociology, history, political science, English and other optional subjects. English, though may seem to be relevant, is not the onus of the college.

"This shows that law-related subjects can be taught in three years or a maximum of four years. This also shows that irrelevant subjects are taught to extend the duration of the course and extract money. The fees should not be taken during internship months as the colleges play absolutely no role in it. The student has to find the lawyer, pay for his or her own conveyance and pay the college for it," the plea said.

BJD completes candidate list for Odisha assembly polls

STATE TIMES NEWS

BHUBANESWAR: Ruling BJD president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Thursday announced the names of three more candidates and changed the nominee in one Vidhan Sabha seat, finalising the list for all the 147 assembly seats in the state.

Among the new nominees, Sabitri Pradhan will contest for Khandapada assembly seat in Nayagarh district, while Sandhyarani Das will represent Korei in Jajpur district.

Sandhyarani Das is the mother of BJD's organisational secretary and Lok Sabha candidate Pranab Prakash Das and wife of late Ashok Das, former Janata Dal president.



Turncoat sitting MLA Sukant Nayak, who joined BJD on March 31 after resigning from the BJP, has been nominated for Nilgiri assembly segment.

The BJD has replaced its candidate in Deogarh assembly seat, with Romanch Ranjan Biswal taking the place of Bamanda 'Rami' Arundhati Devi, the wife of erstwhile Deogarh king and BJP's Sambalpur MP Nitesh Ganga Dev.