

Clerics divided on UP govt's order to madrasas to videograph I-Day celebrations

LUCKNOW, AUG 13/- The decision to record Independence Day celebrations in madrasas (Islamic Schools) of Uttar Pradesh for the first time has evoked a mixed response from Muslim clerics.

While one section of Muslim clerics is of the view that it will enhance "transparency and trust", another feels that the "unusual order" questions the patriotism of the minority community. The Uttar Pradesh government recently directed all madrasas to hold celebrations on Independence Day and videograph the event, according to minority welfare minister Laxmi Narayan Chaudhary.

According to an official circular, on Independence Day, flag hoisting and recitation of the national anthem should take place at 8 am. Following this, tributes should be paid to the martyrs of the freedom struggle.

Students will sing songs on nationalism and will be told about the history of August 15

and freedom fighters, it said. Besides, cultural programmes will be organised on the theme of national unity, along with sports activities. Sweets will be distributed at the end of the session.

The circular asks minority welfare officers to direct all madrasas to ensure that Independence Day is celebrated with zeal and all programmes mentioned in the directive are organised.

Reacting to the directive, All India Muslim Personal Law Board member Maulana Khalid Rashid Farangi Mahli said the community has been celebrating Independence Day since 1947 in madrasas, hoisting the national flag and singing the national anthem. "What is the intention behind the order?" he wondered.

"If you (the UP government) have issued the same order and directives for all the schools, colleges and educational institutes, then we have no objection. If it is only for

madrasas, then it seems to be an unusual order. If it is only in madrasas, does it mean that patriotism is being suspected?" he told PTI today.

On the other hand, Yasob Abbas, the spokesperson of All-India Shia Personal Law Board (AISPLB), said there should be no objection to videography and photography of Independence Day celebrations in madrasas but suggested that the directive should be for all educational institutions. "There should be no objection in getting the Independence Day photographed or videographed. This will enhance transparency and trust, and also help in removing doubts about Muslims, who are looked upon rather suspiciously. However, we feel that this directive should be for all educational institutions of other religions also. Madrasas had participated in freedom struggle," Abbas said.

UP BJP leader Romana Siddiqui welcomed the move of the UP government. "August 15 is our Independence Day. When every institute in the country celebrates the day with full patriotic fervour, then why should the madrasas lag behind. If convents and missionary schools celebrate Independence Day by holding a number of events, then why not the madrasas," she said.

UP Minority Welfare minister Laxmi Narayan Chaudhary said celebrations will inspire students who will learn more about the contribution of freedom fighters. He said children can treasure memories of the event through photographs and videos which will also act as a source of inspiration for others.

Chaudhary's junior, Baldev Aulakh, the minister of state for minority welfare, even warned of action against madrasas which do not follow the order. "We have asked for videography of all programmes. We can check at random as to which madrasa has celebrated it or

not. If any madrasa does not celebrate it, action will be taken against it," Aulakh said, without elaborating.

Madrasas get financial assistance from the state government. At present, around 8,000 madrasas in UP are recognised by the UP Madrasa Shiksha Parishad, a government body. Among these, 560 are fully-aided by the state.

Asked if the order did not amount to putting pressure on madrasas, the MoS said, "Students should know about the lives of freedom fighters. Everyone should know the role played by our freedom fighters in ensuring that the country is free from the yoke of British rule. Their great lives are taught in schools and it should be imparted in madrasas as well."

On whether the circular was tantamount to keeping a watch on them, Aulakh said, "Why this feeling has crept in? Just a circular has been issued and you have been celebrating the Day should not have any

objection." "This is a national festival. Madrasas take funds and facility from the government. If the government has issued any such circular, then you must enthusiastically participate in the Independence Day celebrations and there should be no objection," he said. "We have asked for videography of all programmes."

Whatever programme is held anywhere should be videographed. We will have the information about madrasas that celebrated the Independence Day. We can also ask any madrasa about the Independence Day celebrations. If there is any anomaly in celebrating the national festival, which symbolises patriotism and love for the nation, a disciplinary action will be taken," he added.

Taking a dig at the rival political parties, Chaudhary said, "Unlike previous governments, which indulged in politics of appeasement, we are a government with nationalist

benefit of mind." The BJP government led by Yogi Adityanath took over the reins of power in March. "Every citizen born in India celebrates different festivals ranging from Holi, Diwali, Eid and Lohri. But when it comes to national festivals, they are celebrated by the entire nation. And, madrasas should not exclude themselves from participating in national festivals," Chaudhary said.

The minister said celebrations in madrasas on Independence Day will be videographed and photographed so that good programmes can be encouraged and repeated in future.

When asked what prompted the government to issue such a directive to madrasas, Chaudhary said, "Directives were issued as the government recognised that madrasas get funds from the state government and are supposed to celebrate the national festivals, including Independence Day."



Kerala capital wore a deserted look on Sunday as the BJP called for a dawn-to-dusk hartal to protest against the killing of an RSS activist, allegedly by CPI(M) workers.

Bedi hails CM's decision to visit constituencies every week

PUDUCHERRY, AUG 13/- Lt Governor Kiran Bedi today hailed Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy's announcement that he and his ministerial colleagues would camp in assembly constituencies every week to listen to people's grievances and settle them on the spot.

Narayanasamy had said yesterday that the camps would begin next month and that no discrimination would be made between ruling and opposition parties' segments.

In her WhatsApp message today, Bedi described herself as 'your (people's representatives) well wisher', thanked the political representatives for deciding to undertake the visits and urged them to consider some suggestions she and team Raj Nivas' had given ever since she assumed office in May 2016.

These included making the constituencies open defecation free, regular visits to dispensaries, government offices, schools and market centres to meet people and hear their grievances.

Holding town hall meetings once a month, where people with a grievance or suggestion could speak out was another such, she said. "Puducherry will be cleaner, safer and happier" she said. She tweeted that for transforming India, public officials, elected and appointed members must attend to people's needs and grievances on daily basis.

There has been a war of words between the former IPS officer and the government on several occasions, the latest being the one relating to establishment of the port here. While she wanted environmental aspects taken care of, she had faced flak from the Chief Minister and Welfare Minister M. Kandasamy, who alleged she had been trying to block developmental projects.

Amit Shah visits Adichunchanagiri Mutt

BENGALURU, AUG 13/- On the second day of his three-day visit to Karnataka ahead of the 2018 assembly polls, BJP President Amit Shah today visited Adichunchanagiri Mutt, which is highly regarded by the dominant Vokkaliga community in the state. His visit to the mutt in Nagamangala taluk in neighbouring Mandya district, with significant influence over Vokkaligas, is seen as an attempt to woo the community.

Vokkaligas are the second largest community in Karnataka after Lingayats; they are significantly present in the old Mysuru or southern Karnataka region. Shah met the president of the mutt Nirmalanandana Swami and offered prayers at the temple. He later released a biography on Balaganadharanatha Swamiji, the previous pontiff, titled 'Story of a Guru'. Lauding the works by the mutt and its pontiffs for the welfare of society, Shah made a special reference about Nadaprabhu Kempe Gowda, the founder of Bengaluru, who is highly

regarded by Vokkaligas as he belonged to the community.

"Having come here, I will fail in my duty if I don't remember Nadaprabhu Kempe Gowda, who was the follower of Adichunchanagiri Mutt," he said.

Shah also appreciated the efforts put in by mutts and religious institutions in India towards ensuring a welfare society. "In many countries in the world it is entirely the government's duty to ensure the welfare of society.

There are welfare states in many countries, but it is only in India where attempts are being made to create a welfare society because of the efforts being put in by mutts and religious institutions along with the government... sometimes they are even ahead of the government," he added.

Sounding the poll bugle in Karnataka, Shah had yesterday kicked off his visit to the state, declaring that the party stands united and said, 'Aa Ki Baar, BJP Sarkar' (This time, a BJP government). Earlier today, he chaired a meeting of the political affairs

committee of the Karnataka BJP at the party headquarters here, which was attended by state BJP President B S Yeddyurappa, Union ministers Ananth Kumar, Sridhananda Gowda and other state leaders. Sources said that during the meeting, Shah asked party leaders to work together untidily towards ensuring victory in the coming assembly polls.

Shah's comment on the faction-riven state unit comes after Yeddyurappa came under criticism from a section of party workers over his alleged "arbitrary style of functioning with another senior leader K S Eshwarappa openly flagging the issue until both were told to shun open display of differences."

Later in the day, Shah will visit the Art of Living Ashram to call on spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravishankar. He is also scheduled to address conveners of various projects and departments of the party, and Vistarakas involved in the party's Deen Dayal Upadhyay Vistar Yojna. (PTI)

Wall collapse deaths

SITAPUR (UP), AUG 13/- Four children died and two others were critically injured when a wall they were playing close to, collapsed, the police said today. The incident took place yesterday evening in village Rasoolpur in the Sadarpur area in this district, they said. The deceased have been identified as Ramashankar (10), Aman (8), Vandana (7) and Gauri (7). The injured children, Golu (13) and Arun (8), rushed to a hospital, where their condition was stated to be serious, the police said. The bodies of deceased have been sent for post-mortem, they said. (PTI)

Landslide death

PITHORAGARH, AUG 13/- A 16-year-old girl was killed and her parents are missing after a landslide triggered by heavy rains buried their house in Uttarakhand's Madrama village, an official said today.

The sudden landslides occurred at 9.30 pm yesterday, killing Sunita on the spot. Her father Sher Singh and mother Radha Devi are missing after the landslide. Pithoragarh district disaster management officer R S Rana said.

Twenty-four NDRF and SDRF personnel, 17 ITBP and 30 members of the revenue and medical teams have started search and rescue operations in the area, district disaster management office sources said. Those injured in the landslide are being treated on the spot while one seriously injured patient, Rekha Devi, has been referred to a hospital at the district headquarter, Rana said. According to the sources, six cats and 12 goats belonging to the family also perished in the incident. (PTI)

A farce called peace meetings: What CPM, BJP now to do

R. SREEKUMARAN

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Yet another peace meeting has come and gone. But peace has eluded violence in Kerala. In Thiruvananthapuram district, which has witnessed clashes between the CPM and the BJP. The most disturbing aspect of the latest round of violence is that it has spread to new areas, Thiruvananthapuram being the latest to be hit by CPM-BJP clashes. Hitherto, violence was confined to Kannur district. That has become a thing of the past with Thiruvananthapuram being added to the 'disturbed area' list.

An important aspect of the usual platitudes about the paramount need for ending the cycle of violence. Both sides resolved to rein in the hotheads and act against the guilty on their side respectively. But unfortunately, so far, these declarations have remained on paper. And that exactly is the reason why peace is not forthcoming. To illustrate the point, a few months ago, CPM state secretary Kodiyeri Balakrishnan had said the CPM

would not try to protect party activists found to be involved in violence. That statement raised expectations and hopes. But, there has been no follow-up. The result: eruption of fresh violence, that too, in new areas like Thiruvananthapuram. Here, being the ruling party, the CPM has to take the initiative. The time has come to turn pious declarations into concrete action. The CPM can - and must - make a beginning by acting against party activists behind the latest violence in the Kerala capital. Such deterrent action will make it difficult for the rival BJP-RSS combine not to follow suit.

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the party, to begin with and expulsions in case of the incorrigible elements. There is another reason why the CPM, which heads the coalition government in Kerala, must be careful: The RSS-BJP leaders, understandably, have upheld the ante by highlighting the violence in Kerala at the national level. Their reasoning for doing that: the CPM is a puppet of the Government in the state is simply not doing what it must to curb violence. The BJP-RSS combine is steadily building up a case for central intervention by citing Kerala State Government's failure to take remedial action. In fact, the RSS-BJP has already demanded declaring Kannur district as a disturbed area, warranting the imposition of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). State Governor P. Sathashivam has already summoned Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and impressed upon him the need for ensuring an end to the repeated outbreak of violence. Reports have it that the Chief Minister's angry outburst against media personnel who had come to the venue of the latest peace meeting was due to the tough talk the Governor subjected him to.

The Chief Minister must realise that the media is not supposed to act according to his wishes. Their job is to inform the public. If even the CM comes in the way of their discharge of duty, they must have the courage to voice their opposition to it. That the media personnel meekly walked out without even a whimper of protest when Pinarayi Vijayan befitted the august office of the CM. Failure to do so would cause a big erosion in the party's voter-support. The CPM's central leadership must frown upon such arrogant behaviour. Any delay in doing so would only hasten the down-the-hill-slide of the party. (IPA)

RSS-BJP against Prez rule in Kerala: senior RSS leader

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG 13/- The RSS-BJP in Kerala are against the imposition of Prez rule in the state in the wake of violent clashes between the RSS and CPI(M) activists there, a senior RSS leader has said.

However, he has also questioned the recent peace talks initiated by the Kerala government to stop such political violence, alleging that the Left cadres have used such process to regroup and launch further attacks.

The Kerala state head of RSS, P Gopalan Kutty Master, said the RSS and BJP are against imposition of President's rule and added that RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat wanted them to engage in the peace talks to see there is no violence.

Talking to reporters here, Master said that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has engaged in a continued dialogue to deal with the violent incidents. "The Chief Minister had convened a meeting of CPI(M) and BJP-RSS state leaders on July 31 to discuss ways and means to ensure peace and avoid such incidents."

The meeting had taken certain decisions and decided to hold similar meetings in three affected districts as a follow up. These meetings were also held during which a framework was evolved and both sides committed to see that conflict is avoided and the police takes action against anyone resorting to violence.

Master said he apprehended that its workers may be attacked as the peace talks have been initiated after an RSS worker was hacked to death here on July 29. "Whenever there were discussions, a peace pause, it was used by them (the Left cadre) to bring another attack (RSS-BJP men). They used that time for the next attack. That has been our experience. They are using that period to arrange for the next attack," he alleged.

The RSS-BJP and the CPI(M) have been at loggerheads in Kerala, particularly its northern parts, after the Left Democratic Front came to power in the state last year.

The RSS-BJP combine has claimed that 14 of its members were killed by the Left cadres during the period, while the CPI(M) has alleged that 13 of workers lost their lives in violence perpetuated by the saffron organisations. Both sides have blamed each other for the "political killings".

Master said that the state unit of RSS-BJP had discussed the issue of attacks on its workers with BJP President Amit Shah seeking to draw the attention of the party's central leadership. He said the RSS-BJP combine was against dissolving the state government. "It is not good to dissolve the government elected by people," he said responding to questions by reporters.

Master alleged that BJP worker P Santhosh was killed in January this year in Kannur after two such peace meetings were held in the district.

Similarly, he said that immediately after the dialogue between both sides in Kannur district, RSS worker Rajesh was murdered.

He said he had spoken to Vijayan when a large number of CPI(M) workers had gathered outside a local court which was dealing with the bail pleas of some RSS-BJP workers. "Fortunately, nothing happened in the court as police took some right steps. But the CPI(M) men had gathered at the court even as the peace talks are on. I talked to the chief minister on the issue," Master said. He said the Chief Minister told him that "they will find out who these people were and added the peace process should not be affected."

Master said Home Minister Rajnath Singh had also discussed the issue with Vijayan. The Union Minister spoke to the chief minister and has sought a report. Like that, it will lead to good results in curbing violence." He said as asked by Bhagwat, the Kerala units of the RSS and the BJP were ready for talks with the government and stressed the saffron combine was not against peace.

He, however, maintained that it is required for the RSS-BJP men to defend themselves if the CPI(M) workers attacked them and ensure their morale is not down. "A planned retaliation is not good for the organisation. But when some incident takes place, sudden retaliation is necessary. We tell our people to beware of things. Be prepared every time as there can be attack at any point of time," Master added. "The CPI(M) had recently said that while the Home Minister adopts one position, another Union Minister and the BJP leadership take a contrary stand. This clearly shows that the BJP-RSS are not keen to see that peace is restored and there are no political clashes," he had said in a statement.

It said that the RSS-BJP 'game-plan' is clear: Resort to provocative actions and uncalculated for physical assaults against the CPI(M) workers and raise the cry that the CPI(M) is resorting to violence and blame the Kerala government for not stopping such attacks. (PTI)