

Two quit Knowledge Commission

Support affirmative action as opposed to numerical quotas

AD-1 281

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Two members of the National Knowledge Commission, set up by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh last year, resigned on Monday in protest against the Centre's reservation policy.

While putting in their papers, sociologist Andre Beteille and political scientist Pratap Bhanu Mehta placed on record their support for affirmative action as opposed to numerical quotas.

The two were among the six in the eight-member Knowledge Commission who felt that the status quo ought to be maintained and the existing policy of reservation should not be extended to Other Backward Classes (OBCs) till alternatives were explored. The Commission formally discussed the reservation policy at a recent meeting in Bangalore and apprised the Prime Minister individually about their respective positions.

• "Not enough being done to genuinely empower marginalised groups"

• "Status quo should be maintained till better alternatives are explored"

Dr. Beteille (Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the Delhi University) and Dr. Mehta (Chief Executive at the Centre for Policy Research) submitted their resignation letters to the Prime Minister stating that in the light of recent announcements by the Government in the realm of higher education, their continuation would serve no useful purpose.

Dr. Beteille told reporters later that he favoured affirmative action. "Though slow to bear fruit, affirmative action makes universities truly inclusive while quotas merely queer the pitch." He questioned the process by which the Government was imposing quotas on institutions

such as the Indian Institutes of Technology without consulting their directors.

In his letter, Dr. Mehta said more radical forms of affirmative action than numerically mandated quotas were needed to achieve social justice. "We are not doing enough to genuinely empower marginalised groups but are offering condescending palliatives like quotas as substitute. All the measures currently under discussion are to defuse the agitation, not to lay the foundations for a vibrant education system."

He opposed the "one size fits all" approach where the Government is trying to impose a uniform policy on all types of

educational institutions. Critical of the manner in which educational institutions are turned into the private playthings of politicians, he likened the United Progressive Alliance Government's bid to extend reservation to OBCs in education to the previous Government's "instrumental use of educational institutions for ideological purposes".

According to Dr. Mehta, "instead of finding imaginative solutions to allow us to transcend our own despicable history of inequity, your Government is ensuring that we remain entrapped in the caste paradigm."

Reiterating the Knowledge Commission's position that a Knowledge Society should be a "socially inclusive society", he said the measures being proposed by the Government would "inhibit achieving both social justice and economic well-being."

23 MAY 2006

দিপ্লি ও কটকে আত্মহত্যার চেষ্টা, অনাড় ছাত্ররা

প্রথম পাতার পর বিরোধীরা। কিন্তু দুর্ভাগ্য থেকে চিকিৎসার জন্য আসা রোগী ও তাঁদের বাড়ির লোকদের কাছে এই পদক্ষেপ ছিল একেবারেই 'হঠকারী' এবং অমানবিক। হাসপাতালের চিকিৎসা বন্ধ দেখে দিশেহারা হয়ে পড়েন সাধারণ মানুষ। এর মধ্যেই অ্যাসোসিয়েশন ফর হেলথ সার্ভিসেসের প্রতিনিধিরা জোর করে তালি খোলার চেষ্টা করলে উত্তপ্ত হয়ে ওঠে চত্বর। গোলমাল চলাকালীন হাজার হন এস এফ আই-এর প্রতিনিধিরা। দু'পক্ষে হাতাহাতিও বাধে।

ক্ষেত্রে ফেটে পড়েন রোগীরা। ব্যাভেল থেকে আসা মধুমিতা মজুমদার বলেন, "আমার এক বছরের বাচ্চাকে রেখে এসেছি। এতদূর থেকে বারবার আসা যায়? এরা মানুষের দুঃখ গোবে না।" রিমজার গীতা মণ্ডল হাদরোগের চিকিৎসা করতে এসেছিলেন। তাঁর কথায়, "সকাল



ধর্মতলায় সংরক্ষণ বিরোধীদের মহাসমিহিল। শনিবার। — নিজস্ব চিত্র

থেকে এখানে ওখানে শুধু ঘুরছি। জানি না কি করে শরীর খারাপ লাগছে।" কাকদ্বীপ থেকে রাত থাকতে বেরিয়েছিলেন রোগীরা বিপক্ষে চলে যাচ্ছে দেখে কাঁদছিলেন একলা বসে। বললেন, তড়িঘড়ি বিকল্প আউটডোর খুলে

ফেলার সিদ্ধান্ত নেন বিক্ষোভকারীরা। হাসপাতাল চত্বরে নিয়ে আসা হয় চেয়ার, টেবিল। দোকান থেকে তুলে আনা হয় বড় ছাতা। এর পর রোগীদের কয়েকটি লাইনে দাঁড় করিয়ে শুরু হয়

চিকিৎসা। সাদা কাগজ, খাতার পাতা, ডায়েরির পাতা ছিড়ে প্রেসক্রিপশন লেখা হয়। দেওয়া হয় ওষুধও।

শুক্রবার পর্যন্ত আন্দোলনের কর্মসূচিতে এই ভাবে চিকিৎসা বন্ধের কোনও পরিকল্পনা ছিল না। রাতে হঠাৎ করেই কলকাতা মেডিক্যাল কলেজ হাসপাতালের আন্দোলনরত চিকিৎসকদের আউটডোরে তালি বন্ধের সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়াটাকে 'ইউথ ফর ইকোয়ালিটি'র তরফে "আন্দোলনের স্বতন্ত্র বহিঃপ্রকাশ" বলে আভাল করার চেষ্টা করলেও, আন্দোলনকারীদেরই একাংশ এই সিদ্ধান্তে ক্ষুব্ধ। এদের একজন বলেন, "আমি তো জানতামই না এমনটা করা হয়েছে। সিদ্ধান্তটা এ ভাবে সবাইকে না জানিয়ে নেওয়াটা ঠিক হয়নি।" আরেক জনের মত্ব, "রোগী ও তাঁদের বাড়ির লোকদের সমর্থন পাওয়াটা আমাদের আন্দোলনের জন্য খুব দরকার। কিন্তু এ দিনের ঘটনায় তাঁদের সাথে আমাদের দূরত্ব বেড়ে গেল।"

বিকল্প মণ্ডলবাদী শক্তি গড়তে আসরে ভি পি

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৭ মে: হাঙ্কিশে জুন বিশ্বনাথপ্রতাপ সিংহের ৭৫তম জন্মদিন। রাজনীতি থেকে প্রায় দেড় দশক সরে থাকার পর ঠিক তার আগেই আর একবার সক্রিয় হ'চ্ছেন মাতার রাজা। এ বার তাঁর লক্ষ্য, উত্তরপ্রদেশে মুলায়ম সিংহ যাদবের বিকল্প একটি মণ্ডলবাদী শক্তি গড়ে তোলা। তাঁর বক্তব্য, "সরকার আসে যায়। কিন্তু পিছিয়ে পড়া মানুষ, অবহেলিত মানুষের অবস্থার হেরফের হয় না। সে জন্যই আমরা চাই এমন একটি আন্দোলন গড়ে তুলতে, যাতে সংসদে, বিধানসভায় তাঁদের কথার প্রতিফলন ঘটে।" এই উদ্দেশ্য সামনে রেখেই ৩০ তারিখ লখনউয়ে এক জনসভা করবেন বিশ্বনাথপ্রতাপ প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী আগেই তাঁর পুরনো "জনমোর্চা"কে ফের চাঙ্গা করছেন। ওই সংগঠনের দায়িত্ব দেওয়া হয়েছে সমাজবাদী পার্টির বিদ্রোহী সাংসদ রাজ ববরকে। এই জনমোর্চার সঙ্গে বিশ্বনাথপ্রতাপ জুড়ে নিতে চান আরও কিছু দলকে। সিপিআই-এর সাধারণ সম্পাদক এ বি বর্ধনের সঙ্গে তাঁর ঘনিষ্ঠ যোগাযোগ রয়েছে। ৩০ তারিখ বিশ্বনাথপ্রতাপের জনসভায় থাকবেন বর্ধন। তা ছাড়া লালুপ্রসাদ ও রামবিলাস পাসোসায়ানও এই সুযোগে উত্তরপ্রদেশে ঢুকতে চান। তারাও

ক্ষেত্রে বিশ্বনাথপ্রতাপের সঙ্গে নেই। মুলায়ম সিংহ যাদবের সমালোচনা করলেও উত্তরপ্রদেশে আগামী বছরের নির্বাচনে তাঁরা সমাজবাদী পার্টির সঙ্গেই থাকার কথা ভাবছেন। কিন্তু সিপিআই প্রথম থেকেই এই প্রয়াসের শরিক হয়েছে। সিপিআইয়ের সঙ্গে অবশ্য মুলায়মের সম্পর্ক দীর্ঘদিন ধরেই খারাপ। ইতিমধ্যে আজই আর এক দলিত নেতা উদিত রাজ যোগ দিয়েছেন বিশ্বনাথপ্রতাপের সঙ্গে। প্রাক্তন এই সরকারি কর্মী দেশের ভিতরে এবং বাইরে দলিতদের বিভিন্ন গ্রাম নিয়ে অত্যন্ত সক্রিয়। তবে রাজনীতিতে তাঁর

এখনও অবধি বিশেষ সাফল্য নেই। মুলায়ম সিংহ এখন উত্তরপ্রদেশে অনেকটা শক্তি হারিয়েছেন ধরে নিয়েই ঠিক বিহার-ভোটটিত্র অনুসরণ করেই এসোচ্ছে জনমোর্চা ও তার সহযোগীরা। কিন্তু বিহারে রামবিলাস পাসোসায়ান ও সিপিআই মিলে যদি তৃতীয় শক্তি গড়ে থাকে, তা হলে উত্তরপ্রদেশে এটা হবে পঞ্চম শক্তি। কারণ সেখানে মুলায়মের সমাজবাদী পার্টি, মায়াবতীর বহুজন সমাজ পার্টি, বিজেপি ও কংগ্রেস, এই চার মেরু আগে থেকেই উপস্থিত। ঘটনা হল, বিহারে যেমন দুই কমিউনিস্ট পার্টি পৃথক পৃথক হেটেছিল, উত্তরপ্রদেশেও তাঁর পুনরাবিস্তার হতে চলেছে।

Can't implement OBC quota at one go: IIMs

Seethalakshmi S
& Mathang Seshagiri | TNN

Bangalore: In a major setback to oversight committee's move to implement 27% OBC quota at the premier Indian Institutes of Management (IIM) from 2007-'08, directors of six IIMs have thrown up their hands saying it would be practically impossible to implement the quota at one go.

The directors of all IIMs who met twice—in Chennai and Bangalore—on the quota issue have told the core group on management institutions chairman Samuel Paul that their plates are full and it would be unrealistic to launch reservation for OBCs on full scale from next June.

"To implement 27% reservations, IIMs will have to increase the intake by 54%. Given the shortage of faculty and inadequate infrastructure, none of the IIMs can handle this extent of expansion in just one year. We must stagger the implementation, if quality is not to be compromised. The preferred option would be to implement it in a modest way," Paul, former IIM-A director, who heads the core group on management schools, told TOI.

If IIM-A has no land to even build a shed, IIM-Kozhikode has a peculiar problem. The IIM-K director has told the core group that as the institute is located in a hilly region, finding a contractor is difficult. The situation is grim even on the faculty front. While the pre-

WHAT IIMs WANT



- Staggered quota implementation
- Increase in retirement age from 62 to 65
- No insistence on PhD for faculty in accounting, finance, marketing
- Freedom for board of governors to take own decisions
- More IIMs rather than burdening existing ones

mier B-schools are struggling to fill even the sanctioned posts due to lack of qualified faculty, each IIM will have to recruit 23 additional faculty if the quota will have to be implemented.

"This scale of recruitment has never happened in any of the IIMs. Each institute recruits only about 5-6 faculty every year, but finding 23 professors will not only result in intense competition among the IIMs but may

also lead to poaching," Paul said.

All IIM directors want the Centre to relax various norms to overcome limitations in implementing the quota plan. IIMs have suggested that their respective Board of Governors should be authorised to take final decisions on matters relating to recruitment, faculty compensation and capacity building to beat delay in getting government clearances.

"To attract good faculty you need to offer attractive salary. IIMs have not been able to offer good compensation since they are bound by the Pay Commission. The directors have suggested that the retirement age should be relaxed from 62 to 65 years. Even during recruitment, the existing rules insist that the faculty has to be a Ph.D. In the areas of accounting, finance and marketing it is difficult to find a faculty with a Ph.D. In these areas a good chartered accountant may be appointed," Paul said.

Though a final meeting of IIM directors to finalise their recommendations is scheduled for next week, Paul feels the entire exercise would be futile if the Brand IIM suffers due to quota. "There is immense pressure on IIMs to implement quota because the intake is limited and pay packets are the best in the country. The government has to ensure that the brand is not destroyed while implementing reservations. If there is no brand, no body gains—including the OBCs."

Quotas a 'must' says Meira Kumar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 23

AS THE debate on reservations for backward classes in higher education continues, Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Meira Kumar today said such quotas were "a must for the development of the country".

She explained that the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other marginalised sections of society had limited access to higher education.

Speaking at a function to felicitate SC students awarded scholarships to study abroad, she asserted that the backward classes "had been and

'Backward classes are suffering non-availability of opportunity'

still are denied even the right to education".

The minister said talent was not the monopoly of any particular group; the percentage of students to whom higher education was available or who can afford it is not in line with expectations.

More than the lack of talent and capability, students from marginalised sections faced the problem of "non-availability of opportunity", she said.

This view is shared by many people, she said and recalled the endorsement by 22 top industrial houses of the view that there is a need to provide greater economic opportunities for the disadvantaged.

“We are trying to build an inclusive society”

M. Veerappa Moily, chairman of the Oversight Committee for implementation of 27 per cent reservation for OBCs in central educational institutions, discusses the tasks before him. Excerpts from an interview in New Delhi:

Anita Joshua

There is confusion over the mandate of the Oversight Committee, particularly vis-à-vis State Universities and private colleges. The initial impression was that the Committee will monitor implementation of 27 per cent reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in central educational institutions only. So what is your mandate?

The reference to our Committee is implementation of 27 per cent reservation for OBCs in institutes of higher learning which covers everything: Institutions coming under the Central Act, institutions coming under the State Acts, including private and deemed. Our second mandate is to assess additional infrastructure and other requirements for increasing the overall availability of seats to a level so that the present number of seats available to the general category students does not decline. To enable us to get inputs on infrastructure and faculty requirements, five sub-committees have been appointed. Even the terms of reference for these sub-committees have been prescribed by the Government. The idea is to have expansion, inclusion, and excellence. And, to utilise this opportunity to build a knowledge society. We are trying to build an inclusive society; the idea is not to exclude anybody but include everybody.

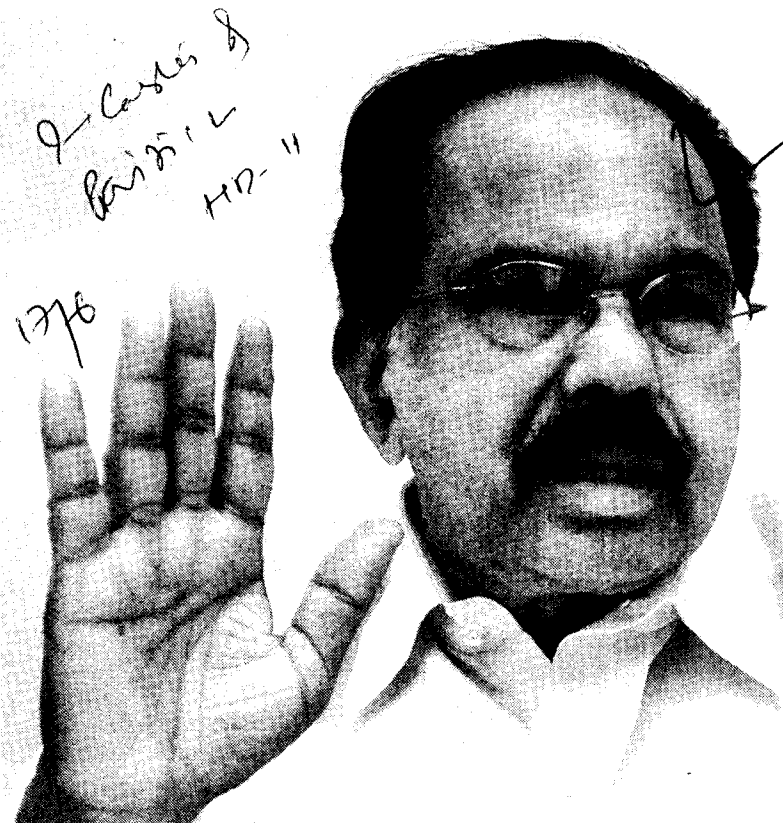
Did you at any point suggest that OBC reservation should be staggered and introduced only in the Indian Institutes of Technology, the Indian Institutes of Management, and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in 2007-08?

No. Our mandate is very clear on this. OBC reservation will have to be introduced in all central educational institutions from the next academic year and intake will also have to increase accordingly ... there is no confusion on this. It is because time is at a premium that we have asked the five sub-groups to give us inputs for submitting an interim report to the Government by July 10 to take advance action by way of financial sanctions, administrative sanctions, faculty increase.

Time is running out. We have to work on a war footing. At the same time we cannot sacrifice the merit environment in these institutions. We have a big task. As of today, it may look quite difficult and impossible. It is not a question of whether it is possible to implement it by next year or not. We have to make it possible.

Does the Oversight Committee have the mandate to decide for State Universities since education is a State subject?

Yes, that is the mandate of the 93rd Constitution Amendment. Agreed, States have to bring out their own laws as per the 93rd Amendment but we can work out the pack-



Veerappa Moily: “Education is a great weapon in the hands of the people. It is the key to prosperity.” – PHOTO: V. SUDERSHAN

ages, give suggestions ... Of course, the ultimate decision will be theirs.

Did you ask the Human Resource Development Ministry to finalise the enabling legislation to operationalise the 93rd Amendment in Central educational institutions only after consultations with the Oversight Committee?

The Bill is the prerogative of the Government and Parliament. It is not part of the mandate of the Committee. The inputs of the Committee may be useful for the implementation of the Bill. The Committee has not asked for a copy of the draft legislation as is being made out.

Has it been referred to you?

No.

There are reports of differences within the Committee.

It is only a media creation. All decisions will be taken unanimously.

There is an impression that the Oversight Committee is exceeding its mandate.

Unnecessary confusion is being created. Our mandate is very clear. The only thing I have added is using this increase in funding to build a knowledge society through this

have to be empowered. They will have to get an entry to institutions of higher learning. We spend only 0.37 per cent of the GDP on higher education. With the money that will be made available to provide OBC reservation, we can definitely work towards a knowledge society. We are using this as a window of opportunity for generating a large pool of technical and professional manpower. Today, only a couple of our institutions enjoy a brand equity. The idea is to increase their number.

There is a fear that increase in intake will dilute the quality of education.

Why do you forget that Nalanda and Taxila universities used to have 10,000 to 15,000 students on one campus? Why are we shying away from increasing intake? [The] Massachusetts Institute of Technology has 5,000 students on one campus. We do not have so many students in all our Indian Institutes of Technology put together.

You have been talking about innovative measures. What are they?

Many options are under consideration including changing the student-teacher ratio. We have a traditional approach. Our mindsets are blocked. Unless you put the premier institutions on the fast track of accelerated development, it will take us another 100 years to come up to the level of even developing countries. Our target was to increase enrolment in higher education to 10 per cent in the Tenth Five Year Plan but we are at eight per cent.

Faculty shortage is a big concern.

We want to get over these apprehensions. Faculty shortage is because pay packages are not attractive. We must have a new look at all these issues.

Does this mean teacher salaries may go up?

Possibly. Education should be given top priority. Poverty can be eradicated by providing education, which is a great weapon in the hands of the people. Education is the key to prosperity.

The creamy layer issue: Will you be looking into it?

That is an issue relating to the policy of the Government. [The] Oversight Committee does not have a mandate to look into it. At best, we may fine-tune the policy of the Government to make it acceptable to the people.

Though you maintain that the task ahead is possible, you concede that it is onerous. What are the greatest hurdles?

Mindset. We refuse to think out of the box. Revolutionary thinking will have to be introduced. Nothing is impossible in these days of technology. Once the mindset is liberated, we will be on our way.

process. After all, only eight per cent of Indians have access to tertiary education while it is about 25 per cent in developing countries. And, in advanced countries the access rate is in the vicinity of 85 per cent. China has an access rate of 65 to 70 per cent. How can we build a knowledge society with such low enrolment? If you don't build a knowledge society, how do you realise the Indian dream to become a superpower?

So, let us make the best of this opportunity where we have a reform-minded Prime Minister and a social justice champion like Arjun Singh. With all of them there, this is the best environment to build a knowledge society. But, it has to be inclusive, not excluding any section of society.

You have been talking consistently about a knowledge society. But, the Knowledge Commission set up by the Prime Minister to build a knowledge society is against extending reservation to any section of society in its present form.

That may be so, but we are of the view that the increase in spending on higher education to provide OBC reservation without affecting the general category can be used to build a knowledge society. However, a knowledge society cannot be built by excluding a large section of the people. They will

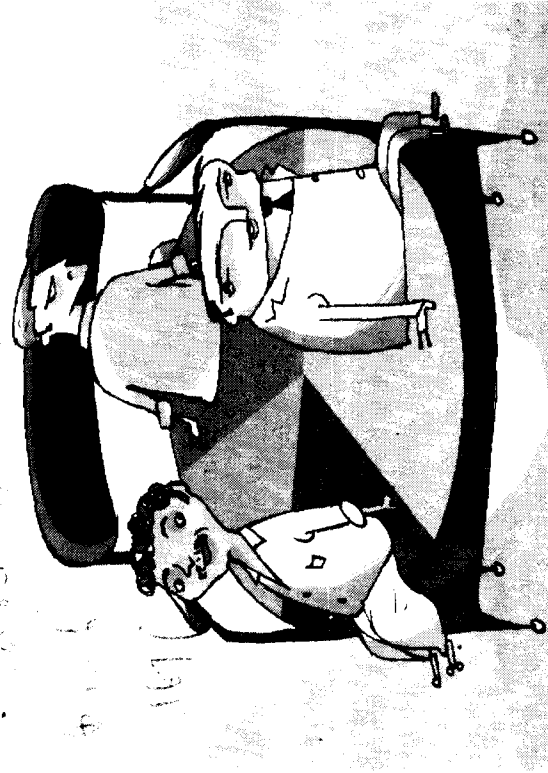
When Mandal meets the south

While the Mandalised version is preoccupied with the proportion of jobs that are reserved, the southern reservations provide an equal emphasis on the proportion of castes that are eligible for reservations, says **Narendar Pani**

THE revival of the debate on reservations has focused attention once again on the geographical variations in the response to the issue. The southern states, particularly Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, tend to get much less agitated by the idea of a quota for other backward castes in elite institutions. A variety of explanations have been offered for these differences, including the view that students in these states are simply more resigned to the inevitable. But such explanations overlook a fundamental difference between the Mandalised reservations in the north and the more inclusive reservations that have worked in the south. Indeed, a stubborn refusal to learn from the experience in the south, beginning well before Independence, has contributed in no small way to the deep divisions that the Mandalised reservations create.

Mandalised reservations are based on the idea of setting right an ancient wrong. In this view it is the duty of the exploiters of the past to make the sacrifices required to remove the inequalities with those who are exploited today or are still scarred by the exploitations of the past. The reservations debate then becomes entirely a question of merit versus equality. In this perception, merit can only be protected by keeping reservations down to those who are severely deprived. The main interest is on excluding those who are no longer among the most deprived.

On the other hand, the southern states, particularly Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, decided in the early decades of the twentieth century that reservations were a means of providing access to all sections of the population to both government jobs and education. A major objective of this exercise was to enable the state to tap the best from all sections of society. Ensuring all sections of society are represented in the government machinery does improve the quality of this service. It reduces, if not removes, the possibility of one set of castes dominating, say, the rural health service, and re-



SASIKUMAR

to generate greater anger. The variation within the category of other backward castes can be quite significant. Indeed, some of these castes can be quite dominant, both economically and numerically, within their regions of influence.

OFTEN the relationship between the exploiter and the exploited is most evident in the relationship between these dominant backward castes and the Dalits. It is this grass-roots reality that sees the Dalits preferring to align with the Brahmins rather than the OBCs in states like Uttar Pradesh. Providing such dominant castes reservations then militates against the basic argument of helping only the most deprived.

Since the dominance of castes does tend to vary quite substantially from region to region, the overall average does not capture the reality of pockets of dominance. On the other side of the coin, the aggregation does not also capture the fact that some castes who may be just outside the backward list may not be quite as dominant as some of the backward castes. Keeping these less

dominant forward castes out of reservations is then guaranteed to generate spontaneous anger.

The reservations in the south dilute this anger by not making such a sharp distinction between those who are eligible for reservations and those who are not. People belonging to most castes would be eligible for some form of reservation or the other. The only dispute is over their share of the reservation cake. This potential discontent too can be minimised by recognising that social relations are dynamic. The degree of deprivation does not remain constant either through time or across castes. Karnataka has had a series of backward caste commissions to monitor the degree of deprivation in each caste.

Such flexibility in the system also provides the scope to introduce non-caste factors into reservations. It is quite obvious, for instance, that students from a rural background anywhere in the country don't have the same access to education as those in the urban areas. Karnataka's elaborate system of dynamic reservations is designed to take into account this factor as well.

None of this is to suggest that there are no distortions possible in the southern system. There are loopholes and the castes that are left out even after this inclusiveness do feel aggrieved. But since they keep out only a very small set of castes, if that, they are not as socially divisive as the Mandalised version, where the focus is on keeping more castes out rather than bringing more castes in.

The appointment of Mr. Veerappa Moily to head the committee to work out the details of the OBC reservations could be seen as a sign that the prime minister is now willing to learn lessons from the southern experience. Mr. Moily did help fine-tune reservations in Karnataka's education system. But it will be interesting to see just how much headway he can make in a political environment where there are huge electoral gains to be made by playing one set of castes against the other.

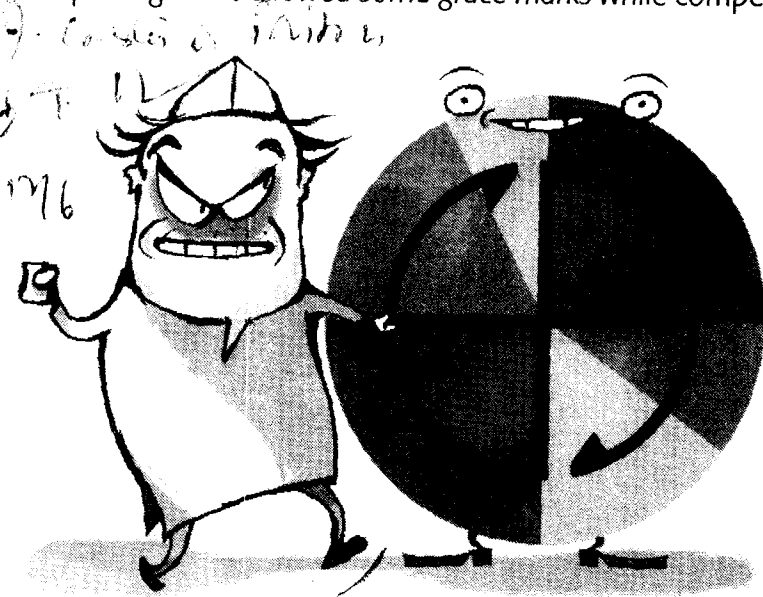
Much ado about reservation

Social justice can be ensured by rearranging the starting blocks rather than interfering with the race. This is the method adopted by JNU, where the underprivileged are allowed some grace marks while competing with others, says U R Bhat.

THE recent agitation by medical students against the 27% reservation for other backward classes in institutes of higher learning has evoked strong reactions from both sides of the reservation fence. Given the fact that the agitating students were able to sustain the protests for almost three weeks till the intervention of the Supreme Court, it is worth examining the issues at hand in some detail from an economic standpoint.

India has been living with reservations of various hues for well over five decades now, though the founding fathers of the Constitution envisaged its effective implementation in one decade. Economic theory suggests that any exemption or immunity from the forces of supply and demand comes at significant costs to society and consumers. Hence they should only be granted after a full examination of the costs in terms of sacrificed consumer welfare and with procedural safeguards and sunset provisions designed to force a pointed re-examination of the exemption or immunity. In a secular India, conferring privileges based on religion, region or caste has to be a well-articulated exception because this is at variance with the constitutional guarantee of equality for all citizens.

Instead of endlessly debating about emotional issues like setting right the historical injustices committed by the upper castes, or by the East India Company or by the myriad plunderers and invaders of the country over several millennia, it is time we drew a line and started living in the present to try to carve out a bright future for the citizens of the country irrespective of religion, region, caste or gender. The perpetuation of caste-based reservations and the expansion of its scope, needlessly continues to keep society divided on caste lines when in large parts of urban India, class is more of an issue than caste. Given that the basis of the government intervention in this regard is justifiably to give better opportunities to the underprivileged amongst us, an economic criterion is a neutral and less divi-



SASIKUMAR

sive parameter to adopt than the criterion of caste. It can be no one's argument that a well to do person from the backward caste needs reservation at the cost of an economically backward person from the upper caste.

A prominent software czar confessed a few years ago that he met every chief minister of the country with a proposal through his Foundation to help ensure that the amount spent on elementary education by the state is well utilised. The Foundation facilitates, at considerable cost to itself, improvement in the quality of teaching and ensures that students are motivated to attend schools by making learning fun. It is a sad commentary on the state of our politics that none except three CMs — those of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh, all of whom are now ex-CMs — were interested in his proposal, possibly because the Foundation would not tolerate any leakages in the system. The much-banded concern of politicians across the political spectrum to social upliftment is thus, possibly, not even skin deep.

Kenneth Arrow, the youngest econ-

omist to win the Nobel prize, studied the question of reconciling social justice and economic efficiency and came out with the interesting conclusion that while all perfect markets are efficient, all efficient outcomes can be achieved using a competitive market, by adjusting the starting position.

THIS is exactly the logic of handicap in golf where participants with different skill levels can play on an equal footing by adjusting the normative number of strokes to complete the course. By extrapolating Arrow's theorem, the social justice issue can be elegantly addressed by rearranging the starting blocks rather than interfering with the race. This is the method that is reportedly adopted by Jawaharlal Nehru University, where the underprivileged applicants are allowed some grace marks while competing with others on an otherwise equal footing. The quantum of grace marks and the required sunset provisions would however need to be fine-tuned by a team of experts.

It is useful to recall that the success in

the field of information technology that the nation is justifiably proud of is essentially a private sector creation with minimal government interference. The basic computing skills have been imparted to tens of thousands of young men and women by the myriad computer training institutes and colleges in the private sector without a role for reservations of any kind. The same is the case with other professions like chartered accountant, cost accountant, company secretary, etc. Given the poor implementation track record of the government, it would be worth freeing up higher education for investment by the private sector, with a competent regulator to enforce high enough standards, while using the higher education budget to award scholarships to the needy — both for gaining admission to these institutes, as also for studying at these institutes — based on transparent economic criteria. The culture of shortages that is the prime cause of the problem is best left to the private sector to tackle as has been successfully done in the telecom sector over the last decade.

Over the past 15 years of reform, young Indians have seen the difference reforms have made to the well being of large sections of society. The young are plainly disillusioned by the divisive vote bank politics practiced by crafty politicians across the political spectrum. They seem to be seeking deliverance from the clutches of this brand of politics and are no doubt reposing immense faith on a scholar PM and a scientist President who can certainly see through this cruel game of vote-bank politics and quota gouging. The fact that after 59 years of Independence, children in India have an opportunity to get educated only on the basis of the community their parents belong to, is a sad reflection of the evolution of politics in India. It is time for some bold measures to capture the historical opportunity for deliverance from caste-based divisions to a more just society based on an equal opportunity to both the haves and the have-nots on simple economic criteria.

'Govt mulling increase in SC quota'

Ministry Considering Hike In Percentage From 15 to 16.23

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: In a move that might fuel another round of anti-quota protests, the ministry of social justice and empowerment has announced that it is "favourably" considering raising reservations for Scheduled Castes from the existing 15 per cent to 16.23 per cent, following the increase in their population.

Social justice and empowerment minister Meira Kumar said her ministry also wanted the children of dalit women who married out of their caste to get reservation benefits to ensure gender equality.

"We should increase the quantum of reservation for the SC in the wake of the increase in their population," Kumar said, adding that, "It was necessary as the 2001 Census had put the dalit share of population at 16.23 per cent, as against 15 per cent in the 1961 Census." Besides the increase in population, Kumar said as many as 68 more castes and one religion — Buddhism — have been included in the SC category, resulting in an increase in numbers. "Therefore, it is justifiable to hike reservation for the SC."

Sources said the ministry was working in this regard. In fact, a draft proposal for the same points out that the quota, pegged at 12.5 per cent in 1953, was raised to 15 per cent in 1970 in light of the 1961 Census. The existing quota stands close to the limit at 49.5 per cent — 15 per cent for SC, 7.5 per cent Scheduled Tribes and 27 per cent for OBCs, and the ceiling of 50 per cent set by the supreme court would be breached if the proposal was accepted.

Referring to gender equality, Kumar said, "There should not be gender discrimination. In a social system, government should also have the right to include the mother's name.

NUMBER GAME



It's necessary as the 2001 Census had put the dalit number at 16.23%, as against 15% in the 1961 Census

Meira Kumar | MINISTER

"That is also what I am considering," she said when asked if the government planned to provide SC status to children of dalit women married outside their caste.

To a specific question whether the social justice ministry is considering the setting up of a committee to ascertain the status of dalits, on the lines of the Sachar Committee on the social, educational and economic status of minorities, she said there is already a committee on dalit affairs appointed by the Prime Minister.

The 15-member panel headed by defence minister Pranab Mukherjee is likely to submit by October its report on the educational, social and economic status of dalits in the country as well as measures to be taken by the government for their all-round development.

Kumar, who admitted her ministry had issued directions to NGOs aided by it to follow reservation rules for SCs, STs, OBCs and physically challenged, said she was satisfied with the response from NGOs on this count but had given more time to them to employ people from these sections.

সংরক্ষণ রিভিউ কমিটি নয় সুপ্রিম কোর্টে জানাচ্ছে কেন্দ্র

দিল্লি, ১০ জুন (পি টি আই)— সংরক্ষণের যৌক্তিকতা খুঁটিয়ে দেখতে পর্যালোচনা কমিটি গড়া হবে না। অর্থাৎ, সংরক্ষণ- বিরোধীদের মূল দাবিটি মানবে না কেন্দ্র। অর্থমন্ত্রী চিদম্বরম এটা পরিষ্কার জানিয়ে দিলেন। তাঁর মতে, সংরক্ষণের যৌক্তিকতা নতুন করে খতিয়ে দেখার কোনও দরকার নেই। কারণ, বহু চিন্তাভাবনা করে আগেই এই সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হয়েছে। তবে কেন্দ্রীয় শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানে অনগ্রসরদের জন্য বর্ধিত ২৭ শতাংশ আসন সংরক্ষণের প্রশ্নে সব দিক ভেবেচিন্তে সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হবে। বিভিন্ন সূত্র থেকে সংগৃহীত তথ্য বিশ্লেষণের

কাজ চলছে। সুপ্রিম কোর্টের নোটিসের জবাব তৈরি করছে কেন্দ্র। তাতে নিজের অবস্থান পরিষ্কার করে দিচ্ছে। সি এন এন-আই বি এন টিভিতে করণ থাপারের সঙ্গে এক সাক্ষাৎকার অনুষ্ঠানে এই কথা বলেছেন চিদম্বরম। বর্ধিত সংরক্ষণের দিকেই ঝুঁকছে সরকার— তাঁর উত্তর কি এই ইস্যুতে দেয় না? করণ থাপারের প্রশ্নে চিদম্বরম 'হ্যাঁ' বা 'না' কিছুই বলেননি। তাঁর জবাব, সংসদ ও সুপ্রিম কোর্টেই কেন্দ্র যা বলার বলবে। উল্লেখ্য, সংরক্ষণ ইস্যুতে গড়া বিশেষ কমিটির অন্যতম সদস্য চিদম্বরম। 'ডেভিলস অ্যাডভোকেট' অনুষ্ঠানটি রবিবার রাতে প্রচারিত হবে।

No revisiting quota issue, says PC

Times News Network

New Delhi: Ruling out any plan to review the quota policy, the government is putting together material that will form the basis of its argument in favour of the proposed 27% reservation for OBCs in higher education.

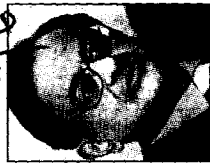
"The ministry has to put together all the material available to it to reach the conclusion of 27%. Wait for it," finance minister P Chidambaram said in an interview to a TV channel.

On May 28, the supreme court gave the Centre eight weeks to reply to a series of queries on reservations. When repeatedly pointed out that his answer suggested that the government had announced a decision in favour of reservations without evaluating the need, he said, "The gov-

ernment will answer it in a proper forum, in parliament, in the supreme court, not in an interview." He, however, said the government would compile its answers on the basis of various state reports of other backward classes (OBC) numbers, the Mandal report and NSSO surveys. Chidambaram, who is a member of the group of ministers looking into the reservations issue, said the government had no intention of reviewing the caste-based reservation policy. "As

I understand... there is no ground to review whether there should be reservations or not. There is no ground at all. If a review means questioning the justification of reservations, I say no."

On Union minister of statistics and programmes implementation Oscar Fernandes' written assurance to students on their demand for the setting up of a non-political commission to review the reservation policy, Chidambaram said it was not the government's position as yet. AGENCIES



P Chidambaram in favour of reservations without evaluating the need, he said, "The gov-

Quota: CPI(M) lays stress on infrastructure

J. Castles & Partners
✓

Also seeks a commensurate increase in number of seats

Special Correspondent

HYDERABAD: The Communist Party of India (Marxist) urged the Union Government to strengthen the infrastructure in Central educational institutions before introducing the 27 per cent reservation for OBCs from 2007. The party also sought a commensurate increase in the number of seats in these institutions so that the share of the general category would not suffer.

During the CPI (M)'s Central Committee meeting here on Friday, a resolution was passed, urging the Government to ensure that the benefits of reservation reached the needy sections.

CPI (M) Polit Bureau member Sitaram Yechury suggested that the Government utilise the reve-

nue generated from the education cess to fund the expansion programme, estimated to cost around Rs. 7,800 crore. "There is no dearth of resources if the Government wants to expand infrastructure," he said.

The Central Committee members wanted the Government to introduce legal means to bring private educational institutions under social control. An enabling legislation, covering aspects like teachers' salary structure, curriculum and fee structure, should be passed, empowering State Governments to regulate admissions and fee structure in private higher educational institutions and professional colleges.

"Unless this is done, a large number of students belonging to all communities will be deprived

of their legitimate right to education because of the exorbitant fee and admissions disregarding merit," Mr. Yechury said.

Deora faulted

The committee faulted Union Petroleum Minister Murli Deora for defending his statement seeking the States to change their tax rates to absorb the recent petrol price hike.

The members said it was not proper to compare the revenues generated by the Centre with those of the States through the sale of petroleum products. While the Centre's share in the total revenue of Rs. 1.23 lakh crores generated through taxes on petroleum products was Rs. 92,000 crores that of the 28 States put together was Rs. 30,000 crores.

Quota question

Can Arjun Singh be allowed to all alone and successfully challenge intelligent liberalism?

THE reality of this government's brave new world of higher education, as reported this by this newspaper yesterday, should give pause to even those who have argued that 27 per cent additional reservation is a blow for social justice. Take the Tata Institute for Fundamental Research, a seriously world class institution that attracts global scientific talent and which figures in Arjun Singh's 100-plus list. Will the TIFR now have to desperately try and fill up its quota, restructure its cost structure and deal with UGC bureaucrats, now vested with greater discretionary powers? Most probably. In that case, what will happen to its real agenda: the search for and nurturing of those with exceptional aptitude in some of the most abstruse branches of science? Even Arjun Singh should hesitate to answer that things will be exactly as before.

And the cabinet that Arjun Singh belongs to must scrutinize his proposed implementation plan of the 27 per cent quota with the knowledge that on them lies the responsibility of not encouraging institutional sabotage in the name of egalitarianism. Singh has slipped in dozens more institutions, including

those that receive no government aid, under the excuse that their status as deemed universities— a status that the UGC confers— makes them ready for direct government interference. This is bad faith of the worst kind, especially since it was never officially indicated that the extra quota was going to apply to institutions that are all but private. For these and other institutions, Singh's dictum that admissions must be fair and transparent could very possibly mean a debilitating loss of academic freedom. The power arrogated to education bureaucrats to check for compliance and impose penalties for deviations, on the other hand, is reminiscent of the licence-permit raj.

Clearly, Singh has decided that the 27 per cent quota policy is going to be his answer to liberal policymaking. The space for liberal policymaking has been won after a long political fight that saw intelligent leaders of both the national parties realize that quality and efficiency, in most fields, cannot simply be mandated by fiat. Should a politician whose personal ambitions far exceeds his political support base be allowed to so seriously challenge that?

K'taka set for caste census

Anil Kumar M | TNN

Bangalore: At a time when the Centre's OBC reservation proposal has ruffled the feathers of the medical fraternity, Karnataka has quietly initiated the process of a caste-based census, becoming the first state in the country to start such a survey. The last caste-based census in India was held way back in 1931.

Now, for the first time in over seven decades, members of more than 1.8 crore households in the state will have to provide information about their caste in a door-to-door survey that will commence in October. Once the data is collected using different parameters, population of backward classes will be calculated. Impressed by the move, the Centre has provided Rs 23 crore and asked the state to complete the exercise by 2007-end.

The process was initiated by former deputy chief minister Siddaramaiah in his 2005-06 budget for an exclusive survey of backward classes. Around Rs 2 crore was also earmarked for the purpose. The Karnataka Backward Classes Commission, entrusted with the survey, prepared a

MAIDEN SURVEY



- Karnataka has lined up a door-to-door survey in October to know about the castes of 1.8 crore households
- Once the data is collected, population of backward classes will be calculated
- Impressed, the Centre provides Rs 23 crore to the state and asks it to complete the census by 2007-end
- The state conducted a pilot survey in 30 villages to find out the loopholes in the exercise

questionnaire and took up a pilot survey a few months ago in 30 villages to find out any loopholes in the exercise.

The villages covered included Nelogi (Gulbarga), Siddaramanahundi (Mysore district), Chanapatna (Bangalore rural), Sandur (Bellary district) and others.

RESERVATION ■ Cabinet Secretariat sends GoM report back saying it needs revision given 'recent development'

PM presses pause on pvt job quotas

VARGHESE K GEORGE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 2

ITS fingers singled firefighting the 27% OBC quota controversy, the government has decided to avoid picking up the other much larger hot potato—the Group of Ministers' report on job reservations in the private sector.

On May 18, the GoM, led by Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar and set up in September 2004, sent its report to the Cabinet Secretariat that the Constitution needs to be amended to bring this about. It also admitted that a decision was beyond the GoM

since it was such a sensitive issue and the allies needed to be brought into the loop.

On May 28, the Cabinet Secretariat returned this GoM report to the Ministry of Social Justice, effectively delaying its consideration by the Cabinet.

The reason, according to a government note: the Prime Minister's office has asked the Ministry to "revise the present note, keeping in view the recent development."

That's an apparent reference to the current quota debate and the decision to implement it along with seat upgrade in Central institutions.

WHAT WHERE WHEN
WHY WHO HOW
QUOTA
WHAT NEXT



Let it wait: tells GoM to revise

On several occasions, the Prime Minister has called for "voluntary action" by the corporate sector on affirmative action rather than imposing quotas. But

Private sector quotas: Problems, Attorney General had said; agreed Fali Nariman

■ **Fali Nariman:** Law for quotas in private sector not valid under existing provisions of the Constitution. Also, tough to justify given that SC/ST quotas in Govt unfilled.

■ **Justice (retired) K Ramaswamy:** Change the Constitution to bring employment of SC/STs in private sector in Article 16 (equality of opportunity). Also define pvt sector under Article 366.

■ **Attorney General Milton Banerjee:** Law constitutionally not in order. Example: Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995, provides for reservation of jobs in the government but not in the private sector for physically challenged persons

■ **Ministry of Law and Justice:** Either amend the constitution or make a law and place it in Ninth Schedule, beyond judicial review.

given the charged political climate in the wake of the OBC debate, the government has chosen not to open a new can of worms—at least for now.

Senior government sources said

Saying that "it is not possible to provide quotas without amending the constitution," the GoM, set up in September 2004, had underlined: "The political desirability, political feasibility and legality of amending the constitution need to be carefully considered in consultation with UPA constituents."

And added that given the "sensitive issues" involved, a final decision was beyond the "remit of the Group."

Any discussion in the Cabinet on private sector reservation will predictably go along the lines of the recent discussion with UPA partners on OBC quotas where regional parties have taken an aggressive stance, shrinking all options for negotiation for the Prime Minister.

that now the GoM report can be sent to the Cabinet only after the Prime Minister's views are considered as well. Sources said it's not clear who will make the changes or what kind of changes will be made.

Caste matters in the Indian media

Siddharth Varadarajan

MY FIRST brush with caste prejudice in higher education came in 1999, when a group of Dalit students from the University College of Medical Sciences (UCMS) came to see me at my office in another English newspaper where I worked at the time as an editorial writer.

The students were residents of the hostel and had silently borne the brunt of casteist abuse and discrimination for some time. Whether by happenstance or design, the Scheduled Caste students were confined to two floors and not assigned rooms elsewhere in the building. In the dining hall, they were forced by the forward caste majority to sit together at one end. If a Dalit student sat somewhere else, he would be abused. "Bloody shaddu," one of them was told when he sat amidst others by mistake, "you cannot eat with us."

The Dalits put up with this harassment and humiliation because, as one of their parents told them, "you have to become a doctor at any cost." But the abuse eventually turned to violence and when one of the students was badly beaten and another had his room ransacked, they decided to go on a dharna. This is also when they ended up in my office.

After hearing them out, I requested the head of the Metro section to send someone to UCMS to cover the story. I was promised a reporter would be sent soon. Several days went by but nothing appeared. It turned out no reporter was assigned. I tried again, this time going one notch higher in the editorial chain-of-command. Again there was no response. Eventually, I decided to do the story myself. I spent half-a-day at the college, interviewed the college authorities, the students on dharna as well as the general category students. One of them admitted reluctantly to using the slur 'shaddu' for the Scheduled Caste students but only as a 'pet name'.

I filed the story but it did not appear the next day or the day after. Nobody ever said the story was not interesting or not up to scratch but for some reason space could never be found. The

If television and newspaper coverage of the anti-reservation agitation was indulgent and one-sided, the lack of diversity in the newsroom is surely a major culprit.

story finally appeared, in a cut and mutilated form, a full month after the Dalit students began their dharna. Needless to say, the travails of the Dalit students at UCMS were not considered newsworthy enough by other newspapers or by any of the news channels.

I narrate this story because of how it contrasts with the extraordinary indulgence the national media showed the nearly month-long anti-reservation agitation of doctors and medical students at AIIMS and other colleges. Despite the 24x7 presence of TV cameras, the daily protests in favour of reservation by AIIMS doctors and staff under the banner of 'Medicos Forum for Equal Opportunities' were virtually blacked out. One channel showed the counter-protest last Sunday only when a 'citizen journalist' presented it with footage he had shot. Often, it was impossible to separate the breathless TV reporters from the anti-reservation doctors they were reporting about. The insensitive and casteist forms of protest some of them adopted — the 'symbolic' sweeping of streets, the shining of shoes, the singing of songs warning OBCs and others to 'remember their place' (*'apni aukat mein rahio'*) — were put on air without comment by the channels. Nobody asked what kind of doctors these 'meritorious' students were likely to become if they had such contempt towards more than half the population of India. And in a media discourse which routinely reports the protests of the underprivileged only as "traffic jams" and other disruptions to the "normal" life of the city, the suffering of poor patients as a result of the AIIMS strike figured largely as a footnote to the "heroic" struggle the medical students and junior doctors were waging.

Amidst the hysteria induced by the media

coverage, no one cared to point out how indulgent the AIIMS authorities themselves were being towards the anti-reservation strike. Earlier this year, when a section of doctors concerned about higher user fees being imposed on poor patients sought to protest, they were warned of dire consequences. Under the terms of a High Court order, no protest or demonstration is permitted within the AIIMS campus. Yet nobody demurred when the anti-reservation students occupied the lawns, put up *shamianas* and coolers and received the "solidarity" of traders, event managers, and IT employees (whose employers usually ban their own staff from ever striking work).

While there were honourable exceptions — *Outlook*, *The Hindu*, and *Frontline* among them, as well as individual reporters in some newspapers and channels — would the media's coverage have been more balanced had there been a greater degree of caste diversity in the newsroom and editorial boards of our newspapers and channels? Put another way, in egging the forward caste students on to oppose any extension of reservation, were forward caste editors and reporters reflecting their own personal impatience with the idea of affirmative action? Was the media coverage, then, a display of trade unionism by the privileged?

There are no official or industry statistics but every journalist is aware of the extent to which forward castes dominate the media. When B.N. Uniyal surveyed the scene in 1996, he found not a single Dalit accredited journalist in Delhi. Today, the position is unlikely to be much better. At a recent meeting of Journalists for Democracy, it was reported that an informal survey had found that the number of accredited North Indian OBC

journalists in Delhi was under 10. I myself have counted the number of Muslims with accreditation to the Press Information Bureau and they barely cross the three per cent mark. In Chhattisgarh, a recent attempt to send Tribal journalists on a training programme had to be dropped because there was none.

One is not saying the absence of Dalit or OBC journalists is the product of conscious discrimination though that factor cannot be ruled out. But the reality of their absence is something the media must have the courage to acknowledge.

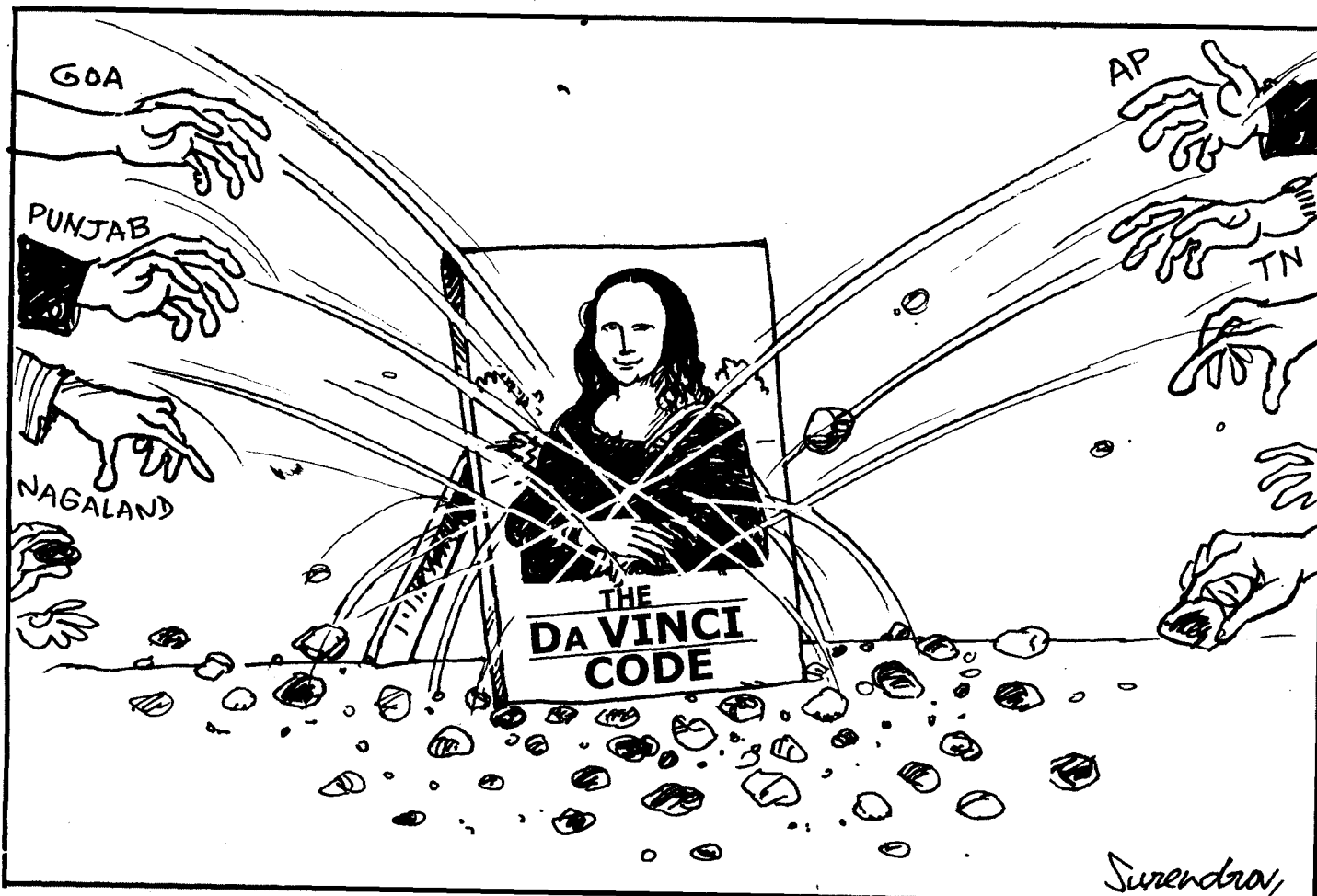
In an ideal world where professionalism is paramount, the caste or religious affiliation of a journalist should not matter. But journalism that has little or no space for the majority of citizens is bound to end up missing out on the complexity of the society it seeks to cover. Story ideas will not be taken up, or if taken up then covered only from a particular perspective. To be sure, many of the negative trends so evident in Indian journalism — the shrinkage of space, the lack of coverage of rural India or of the problems of poor Indians, the episodic, frenetic nature of news, the cult of the Sensex, the preoccupation with trivia and sensationalism — will not be cured by newspapers and TV channels hiring more Dalit, OBC, and Muslim journalists. But greater workplace diversity will certainly infuse a greater degree of vitality in the newsroom as wider varieties of lived experience intrude upon and clash with the largely urban, rich, forward caste Hindu certitudes of the overwhelming majority of journalists.

Far from seeing affirmative action as a threat, India's media houses should look upon the entry of Dalit, Tribal, OBC, and Muslim journalists as an opportunity to broaden their journalism and make it more professional and authentic. Last year, Ankur and Sarai-CSDS provided teenagers in the now-demolished slum cluster of Nangla Machi with computers. The daily diaries and fly-sheets they produced even as their homes were being brought down by bulldozers is journalism of as high a quality as anyone can find in India today (Interested readers should visit <http://www.sarai.net/nm.htm>). Certainly their writings tell us more about the reality of "slum clearance" than any of our TV channels, and in prose that is better than what one normally gets to read in our newspapers.

As the OBC and SC-ST youths who want to become doctors and engineers are saying, merit is not simply a score that can be bought by parents who have the money to invest in the most expensive education for their children. It is also about the talent that all children have within them regardless of their caste or socio-economic background. A society — or an industry like the media — which does not find a way to tap that talent will only end up impoverishing itself. Specifically, media houses must seriously think about starting internships and training programmes for Dalit, Tribal, Muslim, and OBC students interested in becoming journalists.

Reservation, affirmative action, targeted expenditure, and investment are all means of society helping people unlock their inherent talent. As pro-reservation scholars such as Yogendra Yadav, Satish Deshpande, Purshottam Aggarwal, and others have argued, the United Progressive Alliance Government's current approach is not necessarily the best one. But by conducting a shrill campaign and encouraging forward caste students to launch an ill-conceived agitation, the media themselves foreclosed the possibility of a rational debate on what the best way of building an inclusive education system really is. When the dust settles, the media should introspect and ask what they can do to make society as a whole more inclusive. Encouraging conversation and not hectoring is one way. But another is surely to diversify the newsroom by consciously bringing in those sections of society who have hitherto been excluded. There are a million stories out there waiting to be told. If only we allow the storytellers to do the telling.

CARTOONSCAPE



Countering social discrimination

Zoya Hasan

HIGHER EDUCATION has grown enormously since Independence — from 25 to 348 universities and 700 to 17,625 colleges. From the 1970s onwards, there has been an escalating demand for higher education, professional and technical education in particular, especially for engineering and medical colleges, and management schools. But ironically in sharp contrast to the spiralling growth and demand, six decades after Independence the opportunities for admission to these institutions are still largely monopolised by a small privileged section of society. This points to the persistence of social discrimination. Students from middle classes and forward castes traditionally associated with more education — making up about 20 per cent of the population — dominate higher education.

The effectiveness of reservation as an instrument to rectify this imbalance might be a matter of debate. But there is no denying that the Government is well within its rights to provide reservation up to 50 per cent of the total number of seats in government and aided institutions. The Constitution provides for additional reservation for the socially and educationally backward groups. The reservation for Other Backward Classes, much like the reservation policy for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, is premised on the understanding that in a regime of formal equality and open competition, members of a previously victimised group burdened by accumulated disabilities and disadvantages, will not be able to compete, and will, in fact, fall further behind. Preferential treatment can remedy these inequities. This is the rationale behind the concept of reservation for backward classes. The Supreme Court has also categorically upheld this upper limit of 50 per cent for reservation, in *Indira Sawhney vs. the Union of India*.

Though there is a deliberate effort to target Union Minister for Human Resource Development Arjun Singh, suggesting that he was behind the pushing of quotas solely for the political benefit of the Congress party, we need to keep in

The exclusion of the creamy layer is of the essence as it provides a way out of purely group-based categories of reservation. It is the most effective way of meeting the demands of social justice and inclusive education by giving benefits to the most deserving.

mind that the decision was taken by the political class as a whole and the 103rd constitutional amendment was unanimously passed. Besides, a decision of such significance could only have been possible with the knowledge and support of the Congress leadership and the United Progressive Alliance.

As it has turned out, the UPA Coordination Committee has rightly decided to go ahead with its inclination to widen the scope of the reservation policy, despite the pressure of the agitations and protests. It has now announced that it will implement the 27 per cent OBC reservation in Central educational institutions in 2007. In implementing and working out the modalities of the quota scheme, we need to address three critical issues that form the crux of the argument against reservation. The first issue is a basic question as to whether reservation is indeed the best way of rectifying inequities. The second is the issue of whether quotas and academic excellence are fundamentally incompatible, as is suggested in some quarters. Finally, the point as to whether the OBCs are affluent and therefore do not deserve reservation.

Almost everybody who is opposed to quotas claims to favour affirmative action. Starting from different vantage points, quotas and affirmative action converge strikingly in many ways, both are mechanisms of preferential treatment to facilitate inclusion of disadvantaged groups. The principal difference is that quotas are constitutionally mandated, while affirmative action may not be. Given the persistence of so-

cial discrimination, the question that must be posed should not be confined to the limited point as to whether preferential treatment must be in the form of quotas or affirmative action of a broader scope. Rather, the question should be: would alternative measures produce the same outcomes that mandatory quotas produce?

While reservation might not be the best or the only method of correcting longstanding discrimination, however, it is one of the more workable and feasible mechanisms for increasing access of disadvantaged groups to higher education; chiefly because it is transparent, enforceable, and easy to monitor. In the hysteria generated by the protests, we must not forget that the Indian reservation policy has been quite effective and has produced positive outcomes. For example, the proportion of Scheduled Caste students in the seven Indian Institutes of Technology (2003-04 to 2003-04) is about 9 per cent, which is below their allocated quota of 15 per cent but even this would have been hard to achieve in the absence of quotas. The proportion of OBC graduates, on the other hand, is a mere 8.6 per cent. So far, with the exception of a few institutions, such as the Jawaharlal Nehru University, which has designed an admission policy that gives additional points for social and regional backwardness helping to increase the OBC student intake to roughly 20 per cent of the student population, there is very little evidence of voluntary schemes of affirmative action in other institutions of higher learning. The fact that very few institutions have introduced voluntary measures of

affirmative action for the disadvantaged sections and the continuation of the anti-quota protests despite the announcement of an increase in the number of seats in Central educational institutions leads one to the conclusion that the real issue is not affirmative action *per se* but hostility to any policy intervention that sets out to empower the underprivileged and dilute the monopoly of the privileged in education. That is why we need reservation for different groups in higher education because the nature of Indian society ensures that without such measures, social discrimination and exclusion will persist and be strengthened.

The second argument is that quotas militate against academic excellence and will lead to further deterioration of academic standards. This flawed theory is contradicted by the experience of American universities and the south Indian experience. As has been pointed out in the ongoing debate, the experience of affirmative action in American universities has been extremely positive with no dilution of academic standards. Likewise, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala have had high levels of quotas for decades with no evident decline in standards as compared to north Indian universities. In fact, it is widely accepted throughout the world that diversity makes educational institutions more interesting, and, therefore, adds quality to education.

The third point that troubles the anti-reservationists is the issue of economic status and determining who is eligible for reservation. Given the political momentum behind the policy of reservation for the OBCs, a shift to an economic criterion is unlikely; yet, the current controversy over OBC reservation placed the economic criteria on the political centre stage once again. There are two factors here. One is the social composition of the OBCs and, the second, the definition of the creamy layer. As distinct from the SCs and the STs, we must recognise that there is internal differentiation and intra-group inequality among the OBCs. The Supreme Court in the *Indira Sawhney vs. the Union of India* case addressed how economic factors should figure in the definition of backwardness, which means that the government must find ways to disqualify the more advantaged individuals in these classes and help the truly backward.

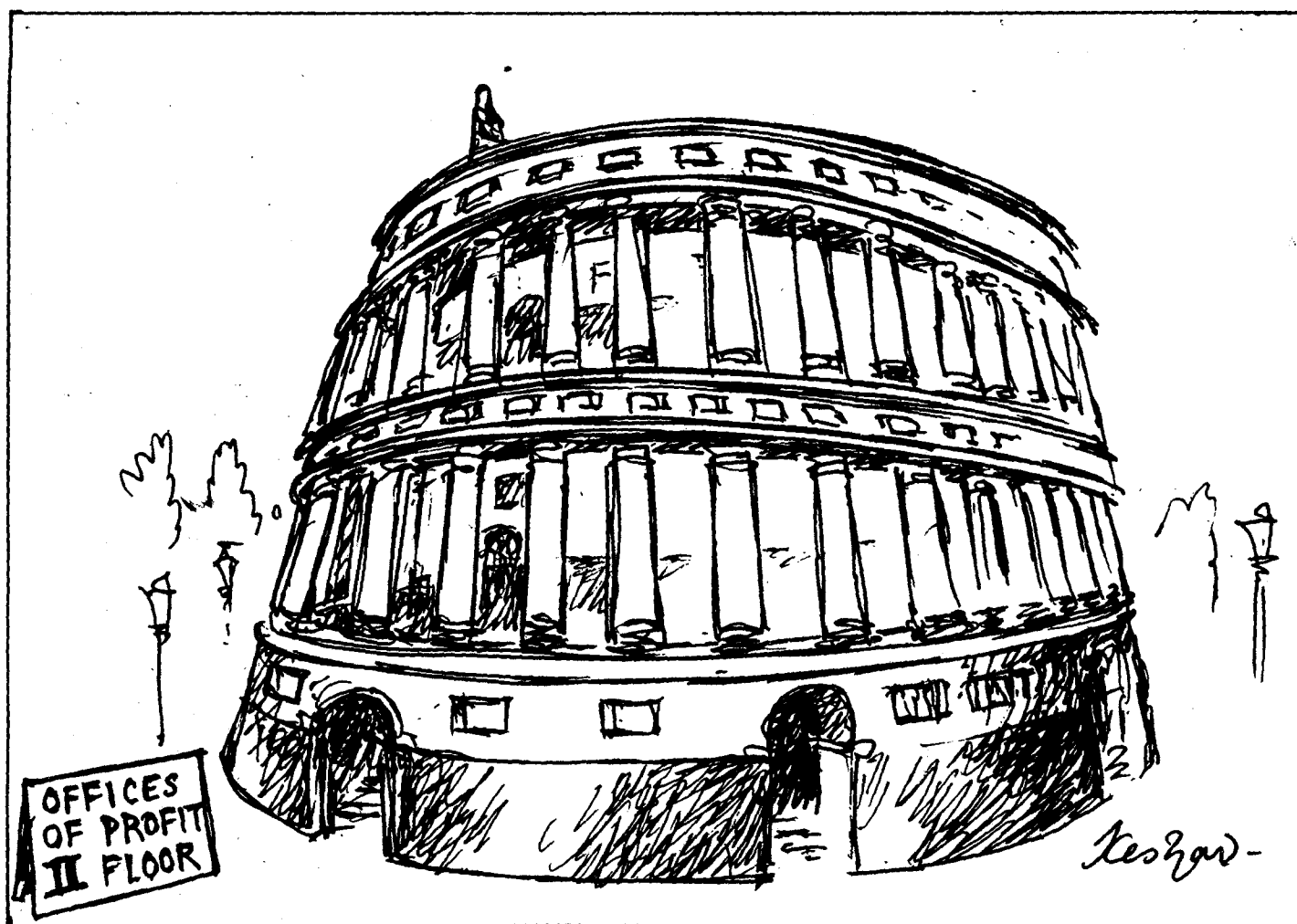
Although reservation for the OBCs is necessary, the Government should ensure that it does not reproduce inequalities within groups that reservation seeks to remedy between groups. The creamy layer rules presume that there are individuals within the group who have the economic and political clout to overcome discrimination and hence it is important to exclude them. But the rules should allow for a situation in which a group continues to be an OBC but individuals within that group are excluded. In India, both economic and caste criteria are difficult to apply because of the large informal economy, and the obfuscation of the economic criteria on account of corruption. But whatever the difficulties, we need to evolve criteria that should exclude the affluent in the OBC communities who have access to jobs and higher education. Creamy layer rules should be more complex than a simple economic cut-off; it should include a wide variety of considerations relating to employment, property, jobs, schooling, and access to higher education.

Two major conclusions emerge: The application of creamy layer rules although complicated and contentious permits the Government to consider a combination of factors, both group and individual, both caste and class, in the definition of backwardness. Secondly, the exclusion of the creamy layer is of the essence as it provides a way out of purely group-based categories of reservation. It is the most effective way of meeting the demands of social justice and inclusive education by giving benefits to the most deserving. To allow the undeserving to benefit from reservation is to deny protection to those who deserve to be protected.

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9-
castes & backward
10-12
76

CARTOONSCAPE



Rahul keeps quota pot boiling

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Prints

PH 1/5

New Delhi: Rahul Gandhi on Saturday roiled the already turbulent quota waters for Congress by a remark which may encourage anti-quota protesters, but is likely to give a handle to its opponents to beat the ruling party with. In his maiden remarks over the quota controversy, the Amethi MP told reporters in Rae Bareilly, "It is a complex issue, both sides have their valid points."

The seemingly middle-of-the-road position was fraught with the risk of sounding like an endorsement of students who have taken to the streets to protest the introduction of OBC quotas in central universities and other elite institutions like IITs and IIMs. It may also be seen as a clear pointer that a proposed increase in the number of general category seats (if not in percentage) was a certainty.

At least one TV channel also quoted the Amethi MP as saying that he would like to meet those involved in the protests which on Saturday appeared to take on an all-India dimension. Party strategists were aghast at the development, realising full well that the statement would be



Rahul Gandhi campaigns for his mother in Rae Bareilly on Saturday

a weapon in the hands of Mandal veterans like Sharad Yadav who are not known for missing any opportunity to paint Congress as pro-upper caste.

Congress strategists seemed embarrassed, but refused to comment. In off-the-record conversations, however, the concern over the political gaffe was palpable. "He should have steered clear of it," said a senior party leader who did not wish to be identified for obvious reasons.

► Cong in damage-control mode, P 8

01 MAY 2006



FALIS NARIMAN

A CASE of great constitutional significance is being argued before a bench of five justices of the Supreme Court, presided over by the chief justice of India. A few years ago both houses of Parliament added sub-clauses (4A) and (4B) to Article 16 of our Constitution by a rare unanimous vote, but with hardly any discussion. The question presently engaging the court's attention is: do these sub-clauses violate the "basic structure" of the Constitution?

I had always thought they did. But after reading a perceptive newspaper article by a sociology professor of JNU recently, I have some doubt. The professor goes for the jugular: "Dalits can ask Brahmins that if they were so meritorious, why is half of our country's population still illiterate?" If meritorious economists and administrators manage the affairs of our country without any reservation how and why are we still so economically backward?"

In the realm of super-speciality education where (at present) there are no 'reservations', only three Indian institutes of higher learning figure in the top 500 of world universities — Indian Institute of Science (at No. 260), and the Indian Institutes of Technology at Kharagpur and Delhi (at No. 459 and 460, respectively). The IITs in Madras, Kanpur, Mumbai and Roorkee don't figure at all, despite the fact that there are no reservations for OBCs in these centres of learning. And, the professor goes on to say, why do we have hundreds of thousands of cases pending at all levels despite our 'meritorious' judiciary? The professor is quite indignant and he won't wait for answers, but what he says must be put in the ultimate reckoning — without rant or recrimination.

I believe that the truth is that we have not yet resolved the complexities that lie buried in the doctrine of equality. How long are we to atone for the oppression of the centuries? For how long should the claim based on merit and on the funda-

Some thoughts, some reservations

The truth is — and this is the bottom line in the entire 'reservation controversy' — that although we have abolished untouchability and outlawed backwardness in our Constitution, many of us — even the most distinguished of us, alas — have not eliminated it from our hearts. In the end, the vexed problem will only get resolved with more meaningful opportunities for better education of all sections of our society, particularly the casteless, and under-privileged.



Only three Indian institutes of higher learning figure in the top 500 of world universities. Still, protests are on. AP file photo

cannot be underestimated. I recall what the late Justice D P Madon used to say when he became chief justice of Bombay. He had sent for and looked into the records on the administrative side of the Bombay High Court about promotions of judges from the district courts and to his horror he found that judges in the subordinate judiciary of equal and at times greater merit were not promoted to the high courts simply because they did not belong to the 'privileged' classes!

No one could possibly fault the senior judges of the Bombay High Court — they were fine intellectuals many of whom moved on to the highest court on merit. Their predilections were unconscious, unintentional. The truth is — and this is the bottom line in the entire 'reservation controversy' — that although we have abolished untouchability and outlawed backwardness in our Constitution, many of us — even the most distinguished of us, alas — have not eliminated it from our hearts.

Meanwhile the debate in the Great Constitutional Case continues. I would respectfully suggest to the distinguished MPs who did not have the inclination to discuss these important questions on the floor of the two houses, when the equality clauses were being amended, to visit the court and witness the intensity and solemn sobriety with which arguments are being advanced on each side, with searching questions being put by the justices. Sometimes even Parliament can learn from the Supreme Court.

In the end, the vexed problem about 'reservations' will only get resolved with more meaningful opportunities for better education of all sections of our society, particularly the under-privileged.

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of individual justices. Not surprisingly, after all, courts are a mirror of the larger society in which we all live, and judges reflect in their deliberations and pronouncements — the ambiguity and vacillation that shrouds the elusive concept of equality.

But one thing is certain: as long as poverty continues to stalk the land and gross disparities between the rich and poor remain a fact of life, the ideal of an egalitarian society envisaged by the founding fathers in our basic document of governance will remain a bad dream. Whatever the nation's karma, the founding fathers cannot be faulted for a lack of idealism, nor can providence. It is not in our stars but in ourselves that we are thus. It is not because of our Constitution but despite its provisions that

we have failed to achieve what were naively assumed to be achievable goals in 1950. A former Union law minister told me some years ago about a "casteless" Parsi judge (we Parsis do have prejudices, but they are not caste-based!). He was Justice Jal Vimalal who was compulsorily transferred during the Emergency of June 1975, as a judge of the high court of Andhra Pradesh (from Bombay); the entire bar took to him instantly, simply because he ignored the caste to which the lawyers appearing before him belonged. "When he left," Shiv Shankar told me, "the entire bar wept."

If the under-privileged have been oppressed for centuries, its backlash in the psychological make-up of the 'privileged'

continuous under-representation of the underprivileged in the higher echelons of public employment cannot be just wished away. Many years ago, UN Under Secretary-General Ralph Bunche explained why: "Because inalienable rights cannot be enjoyed posthumously."

Of course, the final word in all constitutional matters is with the judges. But the courts have not been very helpful. They have interpreted the compensatory discrimination clauses (Articles 15 and 16) differently at different times. True, they have prodded and energised governments to live up to the constitutional commitment to alleviate the lot of the downtrodden, but the ground rules have kept fluctuating depending upon the background

01 MAY 2006

Anti-quota stir spreads

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, May 2: The emotive issue of enhanced reservation in institutions of higher learning saw protests across the country today with students taking out rallies in various cities.

The anti-reservation rally in the Capital, taken out by hundreds of students of five medical colleges in the city, was joined by Delhi University students as well as school students.

The medical students, who have been boycotting classes for nearly a week now to protest the reservation proposal, marched from the Maulana Azad

Medical College (MAMC) towards Jantar Mantar, raising slogans like 'Arjun Singh hai hai' and 'reservation is no solution' and carrying placards like 'Arjun Singh wants another Rajiv Goswami', and 'Believe in intelligence, don't dilute excellence'.

A repeat of the violent incidents that occurred on 27 April was prevented as a posse of policemen accompanied the protesting students. Students in Delhi have also launched a signature campaign, asking people to sign on a 50-metre-long paper sheet which will be submitted to the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan

Singh.

Under the banner of Youth for Equality, this protest also had other participants who did not belong to the student community.

Meanwhile, there was a sort of a face-off between the agitating students and pro-reservation rallyists as they gathered at the same venue to hold their demonstrations. Seeing the anti-reservation rally heading towards Jantar Mantar, several political party representatives who were present at the site to support the cause of reservation started to raise slogans in favour of Mr Arjun Singh's proposal.

THE STATESMAN

03 MAY 2006

Delhi students march against reservation move

Call for boycott of Congress and all other political parties supporting quota for the sake of votes



"NO RESERVATION": Students engaged in a signature campaign in Delhi on Tuesday against reservation for OBCs. - PHOTO: RAJEEV BHATT

Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI: Students from the Capital's five leading medical colleges along with many from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi University and Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University marched from Maulana Azad Medical College to Parliament Street here on Tuesday protesting against the Government proposal to reserve seats for Other Backward Classes in Central universities and other institutions of higher learning. Meanwhile, pro-reservation activists held a dharna at Jantar Mantar.

While the pro-reservation dharna was organised by the Indian Justice Party, the anti-reservation agitation was led by the newly formed "Youth for Equality", which represents college students from all over the Capital.

Pledging support to the anti-reservation protests, the students called for a boycott of the Congress and all other political parties that support reservation.

"Since votes are the only thing that seems to drive them and the only thing that matters to them, we have decided to speak their

language. We are calling upon all our student supporters to boycott the Congress," said Sarangi Sasmit of Youth for Equality.

"It will spread casteism"

Interestingly, the anti-quota march also saw OBC students come out against reservation. Accusing the Government of dividing the country on the basis of caste, the students said the proposal would only spread casteism.

"Most people from the reserved category think the move will help them. But all it will do is brand us as a certain caste and isolate us from others. If the Government wants to help, it should improve the quality of education in all schools or build special colleges for the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes and OBC students. Reservation will only lower the quality of higher education," said Gaurav Kumar, an OBC student from Delhi University's Dyal Singh College.

Reiterating that they were not against the Government uplifting the weaker sections, the students said it was unfair that it was being done at their cost.

"The idea of doubling reservation is simply ridiculous. Why does a person who has become a graduate need reservation to get into a post-graduate course? If the Government has already helped that person to become qualified, that should be enough. If a person cannot manage on his own even at that stage, when are they really going to? Where will it really stop?" asked Azeez Nair, a final year student of the Delhi College of Engineering.

"Support needed"

On the other hand, those in favour of reservation said students from weaker backgrounds needed support. "Most of our children study in Government schools and don't get the same quality of education. A child coming from a rural background cannot compete with a child from the city as they have not attained the same level of awareness. Reservation is essential to ensure that such children become part of the mainstream," said Mukesh, who was at Jantar Mantar to support the move.

See also Page 5

Students seek President's intervention over quota

P. Coorli & Sonke
 4/10/1
Petition signed by 1.7 lakh students opposing new reservation move by Government submitted to Kalam

Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI: A five-member delegation of students opposing reservations met President A. P. J. Abdul Kalam at Rashtrapati Bhavan here on Thursday and sought his intervention to check the Government's move to enhance the Other Backward Classes' quota in institutions of higher education.

During the 20-minute meeting, the delegation under the banner of "United Students" expressed concern over the issue and submitted a petition to the President signed by over 1.7 lakh students from across the country.

"The President asked us to give our personal opinion on the matter and agreed with us on the need to improve the quality of primary education in the country. Although he did not read the petition then, he assured us that



"NO RESERVATION": United Students representatives Dhruv Suri, Gursimran Khamba, Devika Malik, Aditya Dar and Aditya Raj Kaul at Rashtrapati Bhavan in Delhi on Thursday after their meeting with the President. - PHOTO: PTI

he would go through all the 21 points mentioned by us and consider them," said Aditya Raj Kaul, one of the delegates, after the meeting.

by every sensible person in the country.

Demanding that the Mandal Commission report be summarily rejected, the petition said: "The report is vastly out of date and at the minimum requires a serious review by a non-partisan committee that explores the real potency of the report in the context of better mechanisms to achieve its objective of social and socio-economic parity."

The students argued that reservations were dividing the country on a caste basis, while the need of the day was quality education for all.

"We are deeply concerned that the issue at hand holds the potential of tearing our communities into polarised halves and we wish this not to happen. The incidents of protests by groups on both sides of the divide point to similar flashpoints," said the petition.

05 MAY 2006

No quota for all-India seats

PG medical admissions: reservation will create practical difficulties this year

J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday vacated its interim order directing the Centre to reserve 10 per cent of the seats for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes candidates under the all-India quota in post-graduate medical admissions for 2006-2007.

A Bench consisting of Justices K.G. Balakrishnan, A.R. Lakshmanan and D.K. Jain accepted the submissions by Additional Solicitor-General Gopal Subramaniam, who said that this year should be free of reservation for the SCs/STs under the 50 per cent all-India quota. For, such reservation was not provided for in the prospectus.

The Bench passed the interim order on April 24 on a writ petition filed by 14 doctors challenging the method of calculation of seats reserved for the SCs/STs.

On Friday Mr. Subramaniam said that as per the earlier apex court judgment the 50 per cent all-India quota was exclusive of reservation. Reservation was contemplated only under the 50 per cent State quota. Many SC/ST students did not take the test

● **Government alive to its obligations**

● **Reservation for SCs/STs from next year: Centre**

for the all-India quota because there was no reservation. He said the interim order to provide 10 per cent seats for SC/STs would create problems.

However, the Government was conscious of its constitutional obligations to provide reservation for them under the all-India quota and it would do so next year.

The petitioners contended that as per the apex court judgment 50 per cent of the post-graduate medical seats were reserved for the all-India quota and 50 per cent for the State quota. It was made clear that the 50 per cent all-India quota would be calculated after deducting the number of seats set apart for the reserved categories.

But contrary to this judgment, the admission bulletin for this year said the SC/ST quota would be calculated on the basis of the 50 per cent seats available after deducting the 50 per cent all-India quota.

06 MAY 2006

QUOTA UNQUOTE

Lalu reservation policy scripted in caste tense

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI

THE quota debate on Friday acquired a new political dimension with Union railway minister Lalu Yadav seeking reservation for the poor among the upper castes.

The pitch for an upper caste quota — Mr Yadav said the quantum of reservation could be 5-10% — can create troubles for the Congress, already facing difficulties in holding on to what's left of its upper caste base, as the railway minister has stepped forward to become their advocate. Arjun Singh's aggressive advocacy for additional quota for the backward castes has seen the upper castes coming out strongly against the Congress.

BSP leader Mayawati had made a similar demand recently. In a clear attempt to reach out to the upper castes, the BSP leader had said she favoured quota for poor among the upper castes. This was seen as a move to forge a lethal Dalit-upper caste alliance for challenging the Congress in the cow belt. On Friday Mr Yadav, too, appeared to be opting for a similar script to woo the upper castes. The upper castes in Bihar had sided with Nitish Kumar, who forged a formidable non-Yadav OBC-MBC alliance in the last Assembly elections.

"I have no objection for provision of 5-10% reservation to upper castes children by amending the Constitution," Mr Lalu Prasad told reporters on the sidelines of a conference of railway general managers in the capital. On the question of reservation to OBCs, he said the Mandal Commission, which is in operation, was clear and this should be implemented for the OBCs.

"There is already reservation for the SCs/STs. Mandal Commission, which is being implemented, is very clear in providing reservation to OBCs. It should be implemented," he said. Mr Yadav's position reflects

the concern in the government over projecting the issue as OBC versus upper castes one. The Union human resource minister, who put the issue on the drawing board, still believes that backward quota can earn the Congress political dividends.

Not many in the party are equally confident as backward castes are now firmly with parties sponsored by leaders belonging to the community.



Doc presents views on controversy

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Manmohan Singh on Friday broke his silence over the raging quota controversy and favoured increase in the number of seats at all levels of technical education from ITIs to IITs.

"We have to increase the number of seats at all levels of technical education from ITIs to IITs and also improve the quality of training at all levels," Dr Singh said from Panaji. The Prime Minister made this observation while inaugurating the campus of BITS.

He made no mention of the reservation controversy, but the suggestion to increase the number of seats in elite educational institutions indicated a roadmap to tackle Arjun Singh-sponsored "social engineering" proposal for OBCs.

'DOING GOOD AND DOING WELL'

PM stresses a balance

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39-1
75

Press Trust of India

Singh at sea

MUMBAI, May 6. — In the midst of a raging debate about reservation in elite educational institutes, Dr Manmohan Singh today urged a "fair balance" between equity and excellence in schools and colleges.

"I sincerely believe that we must strike a fair balance between doing good and doing well, between ensuring equity and pursuing excellence. Our government will like to see that each of our institutions of education and welfare functions within these parameters — be they schools and colleges or be they hospitals or municipal and panchayat organisations," the Prime Minister said in his address at the convocation of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences here.

Dr Singh identified manpower improvement as a key challenge before the government. He did not make any direct comments on the reservation issue but his remarks assume significance in the context of the debate raging over the quota policy.

"Improving the quality of manpower in government programmes is a major challenge facing us today," Dr Singh said, adding that the non-government sector too was faced with an equally important challenge to improve the quality of management.

"These groups (NGOs) add meaning to our democracy and energise civil soci-

MUMBAI, May 6. — Breaking from his routine, the Prime Minister today witnessed a day and night war manoeuvre in the Arabian Sea, off the coast of Goa, including live long range surface-to-surface missile firings and their interception by anti-missile systems.

Power packed naval fast speed missile corvettes fired their surface-to-surface missiles at dummy targets and Indian Navy's Israeli acquired anti-missile system, Barak, tracked, intercepted and neutralised them. Dr Singh, Naval Chief Admiral Arun Prakash and naval top brass watched from the deck of the Indian Navy's flagship carrier, INS Viraat. **PTI**

ety. However, as their size and scope increases, they also need professional managers. Moreover, they also need people who can take long-term and a holistic view of development," he remarked.

The Prime Minister, however, said that interest groups should balance their views with those of the elected representatives of the people.

"Interest groups must also learn to take a wider view of the imperatives of development and the working of democratic institutions," Dr Singh said.

He said democratic institutions, despite their faults and foibles, had stood the country in good stead but

were in need of constant repair and rejuvenation.

"Our democratic institutions are warps of our nationhood. After 60 years and several generations, these institutions of governance have come to stay but they are in need of constant repair, rejuvenation, revitalisation, modernisation and humanisation," the Prime Minister said.

"It is imperative that wealth creation be done through honest means and we have to make sure that the process of wealth creation does not neglect the poor, marginalised and neglected sections of the society," Dr Singh added.

The Prime Minister conferred honorary Doctor of Literature degrees on social activist Baba Amte and industrialist Mr Ratan Tata. Baba Amte's son, Vikas, accepted the degree on his father's behalf.

Dr Singh described Baba Amte and Mr Tata as "the two most illustrious sons of India" Students opposing reservation for OBCs in educational institutions today said the government was concentrating only on providing quota for students while ignoring other Mandal Commission recommendations like initiating land reforms and economic initiatives.

Participating in a discussion organised by 'Youth for Justice', an anti-reservation group, in New Delhi, students alleged that Union HRD minister Mr Arjun Singh was indulging in "vote bank politics".

Govt-aided NGOs must allot 49.5 per cent quota: Ministry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, MAY 7

THE controversy over proposed reservation in the private sector for SCs, STs and OBCs and in higher educational institutions is yet to be settled but the Ministry for Social Justice and Empowerment has gone a step further — it has asked NGOs aided by the Centre to provide job reservations in their projects.

"In the financial rule, 2005, this provision has been made. NGOs receiving more than 50 per cent of their expenditure from the Centre have been asked to provide 49.5 per cent reservations to SCs/STs and OBCs," senior ministry officials said. The ministry has written to all other ministries and departments of the Centre to follow the policy while sanctioning grant to NGOs, they said.

The ministry has directed the NGOs to furnish details of those employed in a particular project funded by the government and suggest measures to



Chairman of the National Knowledge Commission Sam Pitroda (right) and member Nandan Nilekani during a meeting in Bangalore on Sunday. AP

implement the quota for OBCs, SCs and STs. The rule will apply to NGOs that employ more than 20 people.

While sanctioning grants-in-aid to institutions or organisations, the financial rules say that the grant sanctioning authority should keep in view the

progress made by such institutions in employing SC, ST or OBC candidates on the lines indicated by the Centre.

Officials, however, clarified that the provision had come into being during the NDA regime. But, "though these guidelines existed even during

the NDA regime, it was only during the UPA rule that it has been insisted that NGOs grant reservation to these groups", they said. During 2004-5, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment assisted as many as 366 voluntary organisations working for the uplift of

SC defers PIL on 'creamy layer'

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court has deferred hearing on a petition seeking implementation of its direction by the Tamil Nadu government for excluding the "creamy layer" among backward class communities from benefits of reservation for admission to educational institutions and employment. A bench comprising Justices Ruma Pal and A K Mathur posted the matter for July, saying there was no urgency to hear the petition as the state was in the process of Assembly elections.

The PIL filed by Voice, a voluntary consumer organisation, alleged that Tamil Nadu had not implemented the apex Commission case directing the state governments to identify and exclude the "creamy layers" from among the backward class communities.

the Scheduled Castes. It also assisted 190 NGOs working for the welfare of other backward classes, extending several lakhs of rupees as financial aid.

Consensus eludes on quota

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bangalore: The National Knowledge Commission, while in principle agrees that there could be affirmative action on the issue of quotas in higher education, is divided on what form this affirmative action should take and how it should be implemented to make higher educational institutions socially inclusive.

Addressing a press conference, NKC Chairperson Sam Pitroda said a consensus eluded the Commission on reservation with six of them not in favour of extending status quo and two in favour of extending status quo subject to condi-



The NKC believes that a knowledge society must be a socially inclusive society and this social inclusion must reflect in the educational institutions

Sam Pitroda | NKC CHAIRPERSON

tions. All of them however agreed on the principle of social inclusion. "The NKC believes that a knowledge society must be a socially inclusive society and this social inclusion must reflect in the educational institutions."

Pitroda said six members of the commission were of the view that until

new and effective avenues of affirmative action were explored, status quo should be maintained and reservations not extended. But he qualified it by stating that reservation was a complex issue. "It is time to rethink reservation. There are better ways to address the same problems in what are needs of the 21st century.

We need to evolve better ways of going forward.

He said in the short term, the NKC had not thought of any alternatives. "We are not ready yet. We are looking at it. We need time." He did however suggest that the number of seats could be doubled, even tripled to address the problem of opportunity.

Two members, Jayati Ghosh and P M Bhargava, he said supported reservations subject to conditions. Bhargava said reservations could be continued subject to the fact that the government makes simultaneous announcements that it would open 400,000 schools in the country.

09 MAY 2006

QUOTA UNQUOTE

Prof does not find much support for his pro-reservation stance. One of the bigger concerns of faculties is whether the students coming from reserved categories could pass the internal exams

Protest murmurs from UPA ministers

Our Bureau
NEW DELHI

INDIVIDUAL ministers in the UPA government have begun to murmur over the government's job reservation policy. In one such development on Monday, minister of state for industry Ashwani Kumar emphasised the role of merit.

"Any measure taken for the betterment of certain classes in the industry should not ignore merit," he emphasised.

"Affirmative action on reservations has been recognised within the framework of the Constitution as a medium to promote certain sections but it need not be at the cost of merit," he said.

Addressing the annual session of Ficci Ladies Organisation on Women Empowering India, Mr Kumar stressed on the need for more women to enter the 'corporate boardrooms'.

He also suggested setting up of manufacturing facilities in the country's hinterland as a 1% growth in manufacturing gives rise to a 3% growth in services. Such a strategy, he said, would pave the way of more women being employed in jobs requiring soft skills.

Speaking on the occasion, Rajan Mittal, joint managing director, Bharti Enterprises, reiterated the danger of having any kind of reservation in the industry. "In fact, reservation for women will be like putting them in a pigeon hole and telling them that you are not competent and you are getting a job only because of a government fiat."

IIMA teacher does some three-wheeling on quota

Our Bureau
AHMEDABAD

WITH some faculty members at IIMs threatening to leave if reservation for other backward castes (OBCs) is introduced, an IIM Ahmedabad professor has suggested ways of minimising the negative impact that the proposed reservation could have on the postgraduate programmes.

Anil Gupta, professor at IIMA, has suggested a three-year MBA programme for the quota students as against the existing two years. Prof Gupta has prepared a note which he is planning to forward to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and may also submit it to President APJ Abdul Kalam.

"Actual OBC candidates should be given justice. A three-year programme for students coming through the quota facility will help to bring them at par with non-quota students," Prof Gupta told ET. This would mean that the first year of the PGP course will be of 24 months for the students entering through quota instead of 12 months.

In addition, the professor said the government should provide free coaching for all quota students preparing for the Common Admission Test (CAT). "Most of the current MBA coaching institutes charge exorbitant sums, which is not affordable



especially by the quota students. So, the government should find some way of providing coaching for CAT at a rate affordable to OBC candidates," said Prof Gupta.

A three-year PGP course will have a severe logistic impediment. The placement process for the three-year course will also

be delayed by a year. "The companies prefer taking the best talent and they would not hesitate to appoint them a little later if the candidates are deserving," Prof Gupta said.

IIMA's

director Dr Bakul Dholakia told ET that he would not like to say anything on this issue until he gets a copy of the circular from the HRD ministry. However, Prof Gupta does not find much support for his pro-reservation stance. One of the bigger concerns of faculties at the IIMs is whether the students coming from reserved category could pass the internal exams.

"IIMs have a very rigorous course content and ensuring a seat at IIM is easier than passing the internal exams. The quality of students need to be maintained or else they may not clear the first year of the course," an IIM Calcutta professor said.

A faculty of Management Studies (FMS), Delhi, one of the top business schools in India, too, has apprehensions about the quality of students finding place in the B-school as a result of reservation. "Placement of students coming from reserved category will be a concern and this may affect the quality of placement," CD Bhattacharya, dean, FMS, told ET.



Upper castes re-group against quota move

Samajik Nyaya Manch hands over memo to Governor

Special Correspondent

JAIPUR: The latest move by the Centre to provide reservation to the backwards in professional educational institutions has led to the coming together of various caste groups opposed to reservation in Rajasthan.

The groups, which had unsuccessfully fought the Assembly elections in the State in 2004 under the banner of Samajik Nyaya Manch (Social Justice Front), only to go into oblivion thereafter, have now surfaced threatening revival of the agitation for reservation based on economic status.

The representatives of the re-organized groups of various caste bodies of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Kayasthas on Monday met Rajasthan Governor Pratibha Patil to hand over to her a memorandum addressed to President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam on the move to extend reserva-

tions to institutions imparting technical education in the private sector.

The memorandum has demanded putting an end to the caste-based reservations in the country and commencement of reservation to poor among the "upper castes".

Traditional symbols

The groups had met here over the weekend and carrying the traditional symbols of their respective caste -- axe, swords, and balance -- in hand pledged to launch an agitation all over the State involving the students of engineering and medical colleges in the public and private sector.

The meeting was addressed by Lokendra Singh Kalvi, convener of the Samajik Nyaya Manch, Suresh Misra, convener of the Savarna Arakshan Manch and Subhash Chandra Sharma, convener of the Arthik Adhar Arakshan Sanyukt Samiti, among others.

Only once

The memorandum to the President suggested doing away with reservation in the country so that there existed no discrimination or discord on the basis of caste. In case the reservations were to continue then the advantage of it should be given only once -- at the time of appointment to service -- and not later in the promotions. From among the reserved groups the creamy layer families should be removed from the list of those eligible for the benefits of reservation, it demanded.

In a statement, Mr. Sharma said the present reservation policy deprived the benefits to most of the members of the target groups and benefited only a few families in certain castes. At the same time there were many in the unreserved social groups who were not in a position to afford proper food, clothing or education to their wards, he said.

Justice for Dalits still a dream

Implementation of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act under fire.

Siddharth Narrain

IN FEBRUARY this year, Dalits in Mahmadvpur — a small village near Kunjpura in Karnal district, Haryana — were attacked by members of the land-owning Rode community. Over 30 Dalits were seriously injured. The immediate provocation for the incident was a procession the Dalits were planning on the occasion of Ravidas Jayanthi. The police, on the advice of the village sarpanch (who belongs to the Rode community), refused to allow the procession to be taken past the “upper caste” area in the village. When the Dalits attempted to take out their procession, the police stopped them. The next day, in blatant violation of the law, the sarpanch allegedly instigated upper caste youth to attack the Dalits with hatchets and sickles by making announcements on a loudspeaker from the local temple. The attackers did not spare even women and children.

Tension between Dalits and the dominant castes in Mahmadvpur had been simmering for a while. The Dalits had not supported the sarpanch during the panchayat elections, leading to resentment among his supporters. The sarpanch had cancelled a grant of land for a Ravidas ashram in the village made by his predecessor, and filed a case in the Punjab and Haryana High Court challenging the decision. Added to this, a Brahmin girl from the village had eloped with a Dalit boy around four months before the incident. They got married recently.

The events that followed the February incident were shocking. Instead of arresting those who attacked the Dalits, the police arrested 15 Dalits on false charges ranging from “dacoity” to “attempt to murder.” Instead of framing charges against the sarpanch for allegedly instigating the violence, the police tried to pressure the injured Dalits into forming a 10-member “peace committee,” with equal representation from both communities, and suggested that they reach a settlement.

Only after sustained pressure from Dalit rights groups, and political parties such as the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Bahujan Samaj Party, did the police press charges against the sarpanch. He was finally arrested, weeks after the incident, and is now out on bail. Under sustained pressure, the police arrested eight other persons responsible for the attack. According to Sibash Kaviraj, Superintendent of Police, Karnal, the reason the sarpanch was not arrested earlier was to allow him to take part in the proceedings of the “peace committee.”

The incident in Mahmadvpur — a little over an hour's drive from Delhi — and its aftermath reflect a larger problem of the failure of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. It was



EASY TARGET: A Dalit victim of the attack in Mahmadvpur. — PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

enacted in 1989 specifically to act as a deterrent against physical, caste-based violence.

The Act widened the scope of criminal liability and included several acts of commission and omission not covered by the existing Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955. It provided for administrative measures for enforcement of the Act by making provisions for the establishment of Special Courts, and for the appointment of Special Public Prosecutors to conduct trials of offences under the Act. Special Courts have been given enormous powers, including the power to extern potential offenders from scheduled areas and tribal areas, and to attach the property of persons accused under the Act. Public officials who do not perform the duties prescribed under the Act can be punished with a jail term extending up to a year.

In a damning reflection of the non-implementation of this law, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in its Report on the Prevention of Atrocities on Scheduled Castes released in 2002, had said there was “virtually no monitoring of the implementation of the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act at any level.” It had pointed out that Vigilance and Monitoring Committees, as

prescribed under the Act, had not been constituted and where such Committees existed they hardly functioned. The quality of prosecution was poor because the functionaries entrusted with the work lacked both competence and motivation, it said.

The report also quoted a study of 11 atrocity-prone districts of Gujarat that found that 36 per cent of atrocities cases were not registered under the Atrocities Act. In 84 per cent of the cases where the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act was applied, cases were registered under the wrong provisions to conceal the violent nature of the incidents. Charge sheets were framed in only 53 per cent of the cases registered under the Act, and over 22 per cent of cases registered were closed after investigation. According to these figures, over 92 per cent of the cases ended in acquittal.

Concerned about the inability of the criminal justice system to deal with caste-based violence, Dalit rights organisations have submitted a set of suggestions to the Police Act Drafting Committee currently framing a draft Police Act to replace the existing 1861 Act. These recommendations include the constitution of an independent body, com-

prising members of marginalised communities including Dalits, to look into complaints against the police.

They have suggested that the track record of police officers in implementing laws such as the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act be taken into account in evaluating their performance. Police officers found guilty of not implementing the Act should be punished as prescribed in it.

Besides these reforms, what is needed is better monitoring of the institutions created under the Act to correct the gross under-utilisation of the law. Recently, the Supreme Court issued notice to Central and State Governments on a petition filed by the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights, Sakshi-Human Rights Watch, and the Centre for Dalit Rights, asking for directions to ensure that they appoint nodal officers and set up Protection Cells as envisaged under the Act.

These are measures that the Centre and the States must implement urgently. For those at the receiving end of caste-based violence, what is at stake is not merely a temporary remedy, but the credibility of the legal system's ability to deliver justice.

Handwritten notes in the top right corner: "Caste D", "Bani me", "HD-111", "12/5".

Quota kickoff in Mumbai

OUR BUREAU

May 10: Blessed by the high command, the Congress-led Maharashtra government has become the first in the country to try out the quota formula championed by Arjun Singh.

The Maharashtra cabinet today green-lighted a proposal to bring in an ordinance to reserve 50 per cent of seats in all professional colleges, including private unaided institutions, in the state. The government will now have to get governor S.M. Krishna's assent to promulgate the ordinance.

The state's move was cleared by the Congress high command in Delhi after Sonia Gandhi spoke to human resource development minister Arjun Singh, who had asked states to frame their own formulae after Parliament passed an amendment to get around a Supreme Court order that struck down quotas in education-

al institutions.

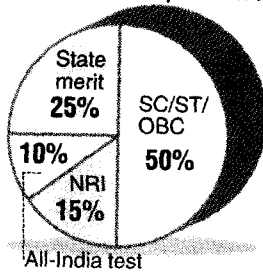
"Rather than allow another party to steal a march over us, we decided to let a Congress-led dispensation take the lead," a Congress leader said in Delhi. But the Congress's ally, the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party, too, claimed credit.

Sources said the Maharashtra overdrive was a "signal" to other Congress-ruled states to implement the formula and prepare the ground for an eventual announcement at the Centre. An enabling legislation to enforce quotas in centrally-run institutes like IIMs and IITs has to be passed in Parliament after cabinet clearance.

According to the Maharashtra formula, 13 per cent seats

THE FORMULA

The Maharashtra quota model



will be set aside for scheduled castes, seven per cent for scheduled tribes and 30 per cent for other backward classes (OBCs) in institutes that offer courses in medicine, pharmaceutical science, architecture, engineering and technical education.

The single biggest beneficiary of the quotas will be OBCs, the group around which the current controversy is playing itself out.

Before the Supreme Court order, 49 per cent seats in government institutions in Maharashtra were reserved.

The central amendment did not lay down specific percentages but the HRD ministry sent an advisory to states asking them to draw up individual

formulae. It was assumed then that the Mandal Commission formula for government jobs — 27 per cent for OBCs and 22.5 for SC/STs — will be followed in education, too.

But Maharashtra has given a larger share to the OBCs, though the state has confined itself to the 50 per cent cumulative limit set by the Supreme Court.

While prescribing the caste quotas, the Maharashtra government has exempt minority-run institutions. "Unaided minority-run institutions will be permitted to reserve 66 per cent of seats for students belonging to the community," an official said.

The draft ordinance also proposes a common entrance test, monitored by the government or an agency nominated by it, for all private professional institutions, barring deemed universities, mostly owned by powerful politicians.

■ EC raps Arjun, Page 8

THE TELEGRAPH

11 MAY 2005

Lalu plays caste card

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI, May 11: RID chief Mr Lalu Prasad, who has apprehended that there may not be a fair trial in the disproportionate assets case in Bihar, today played the caste card before the Supreme Court alleging that the BJP did not want the trial before a dalit judge.

Mr Prasad and his wife Rabri Devi, who has sought the lifting of the stay on the trial of the case in Patna, alleged that such a situation has been created in the state that even the judge cannot not stand up to ensure justice. Referring to the proceedings before four judges prior to the appointment of Mr Munnal Paswan as special CBI judge to hold the trial, senior advocate

Mr Ram Jethmalani, appearing for Mr Prasad said that previous judges were Brahmins and members of the upper caste and the BJP had showed no objection at that time

"When the case was tried before judges upper caste people (judges) there were no complaints. But when a dalit judge was trying the case the BJP started raising objections," he alleged before a Bench comprising of Mr Justice KG Balakrishnan, Mr Justice AR Lakshmanan and Mr Justice SH Kapadia.

However, Mr Jethmalani's argument on caste lines was strongly objected to by senior advocate Mr Mukul Rohatgi, who opposed Mr Prasad's plea by saying that it was improper of

him to raise the caste issue.

Mr Jethmalani iterated his earlier apprehension that Mr Prasad and his wife would not get justice in Bihar and Jharkhand and sought its shifting anywhere else in the country. "My clients are ready for the shifting of the trial anywhere. Be it Delhi,

Mumbai, Kolkata or Chennai," he told the Bench which fixed 12,13 and 14 July for final hearing on the matter. Mr Jethmalani said that the trial could proceed before Special Judge Mr Paswan who heard arguments for 25 days and there was no allegation of judicial misconduct against him.

"This man Mr (Paswan) has unblemished record of integrity in his 18 years of judicial career. He was

appointed against a vacancy by the Patna High Court," he said adding an impression has been created that Mr Prasad was manipulating the judiciary. He said that the locus standi of the petitioner has to be examined at the threshold as in this case he is the beneficiary of the PIL.

Mr Jethmalani was referring to senior BJP leader and deputy chief minister of Bihar Mr Sushil Kumar Modi. Mr Modi and JD(U) leader Mr Rajiv Ranjan Singh Lallan' has filed a PIL challenging the quashing of income tax cases against Mr Prasad and his wife Rabri Devi and had sought stay on the transfer of Special CBI judge hearing the disproportionate assets case against them. The court during the last hear-

ing had said that it wanted the Chief Justice of the Patna High Court to consider whether proper procedure was followed in the appointment of the Special Judge for the case.

Mr Rohatgi has opposed Prasad's plea for lifting the stay on the trial of the case till the High Court Committee goes into

the appointment of Special Judge Mr Munnal Paswan in place of Yogender Prasad who was promoted. He had said that when Mr Prasad was holding the trial of the case the accused wanted stay on the proceedings and even took adjournments on 20 out of 25 dates. The counsel had objected the plea for transfer of trial outside the state saying "when it suited them they were not averse for trial in the state".

Quota politics

Securing Votes In The Name Of Social Justice

The recent amendment of the Constitution to provide quotas in private unaided educational institutions for SCs, STs and OBC overriding the Supreme Court ruling against state quotas is most unfortunate. Also, the recent move to raise the OBC quota in institutions of higher learning like IITs, IIMs, NITs and 20 central universities has caused a repeat of Mandal flare-up. It is considered a retrograde step as it would erode the quality of education and hinder the quest for excellence.

The Supreme Court had ruled that merit should be the sole criterion. It rightly described education as national wealth. It earlier held that in the matter of admission to post-graduate medical courses, candidates in special categories must secure the minimum qualifying marks in the entrance test to maintain a minimum professional standard.

A cruel joke

But present-day politicians are simply interested in building their vote-banks on the basis of caste, creed and religion, and come up with unsustainable reservation. The government has paid little heed to repeated arguments against such quotas.

The earlier move to foist quotas for SCs and STs on the private sector was also strongly opposed by the business lobby. A ministerial group was formed to work out reservation in the private sector. This was considered as a cruel joke as it would be detrimental to efficiency and quality in private industry and would kill enterprising work. Even the person who mandated society in 1990 on caste lines in respect of reservations in public institutions, had felt that sharing of social responsibility should not affect the private sector's efficiency.

Private industry survives on the quality of its products, and helps improve the economy of the country. Such a move would violate the fundamental right of an individual. In its bid to foist reservation on the private sector, the government had directed the NGOs receiving its funds to implement the job

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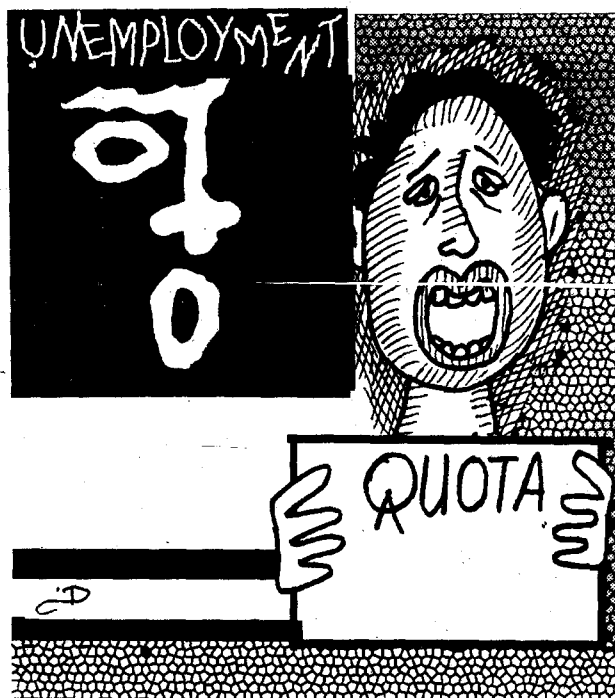
YP Gupta

quota policy.

Earlier, the Andhra Pradesh High Court had set aside the state government's orders on reservation for Muslims. Also, the Supreme Court had quashed the legislation enacted by the Andhra Pradesh government as unconstitutional for providing reser-

educated unemployed. Twenty per cent of engineers in the country are unemployed. The unemployment rate is more than seven per cent.

The unemployment situation in Delhi is quite alarming as the number of unemployed has been rising over the years. There



Today, our youth are a frustrated lot as the unemployment situation has become quite grim

vation quota on the basis of sub-castes. Such classification violates Article 14 of the Constitution. It is unfortunate that quota politics is being used to secure votes in the name of social justice. Politicians have been using the quota plank and casteism as tools for votes, making lofty promises to the downtrodden. They are adding more and more castes in the list of OBC in the reservation quota, making reservation a travesty.

The quota policy hardly improved the lot of the downtrodden. It rather created an explosive unemployment situation because the number of unemployed talented youth have increased manifold. Today, our youth are a frustrated lot as the unemployment situation has become quite grim.

The rising number of suicides by unemployed educated youth in the recent past bear eloquent testimony to this. Today, there are over 36 million unemployed people and over 5.5 million are

700,000 literates registered at 20 employment exchanges of whom 580,000 lakh are graduates. It would suggest that politicians only offer job quotas and not the jobs.

Under the pretext of the reservation quota, state governments have been eroding the quality of education in medical sciences, engineering and other institutions of higher learning. Politicians themselves prefer to go abroad for treatment instead of going to those who acquire their medical degrees under the reserved quota.

The quota policy has not been able to transform the oppressed and suppressed castes. It did not help the backward community as it did not have access to quality education and better standards of life. If the backward classes must be helped, the government must ensure that the goal of universal access to education does not remain a dream. Backward class students must be given the advantage of good education or sound vocational

training and not the easier option of quotas.

It is true that even today the downtrodden continue to live in slums without proper health care facilities.

The majority of them continue to remain half-fed and the economy status of a section of this class has not improved. But politicians coin catchy slogans on improving the lot of the downtrodden.

The Supreme Court had earlier held that reservation should not exceed 50 per cent. The court had also not allowed the two southern states (Tamil Nadu and Karnataka) to raise the quota to 50 per cent as it held that it is beyond the scope of Article 16 of the Constitution. The court also held that caste criterion for promotion violates Article 16(4) of the Constitution.

A mockery

Equality before law is a basic concept of our Constitution where every one gets equal opportunities to develop and flourish under Article 16(1). However, Article 16(4) has empowered the government to provide reservation for the backward who were an oppressed section under British rule and who had remained socially and educationally backward because of their birth outside the framework of the caste system. As such, any attempt to raise the reservation quota would make a mockery of the "equality of opportunity" provision.

Foisting quotas on private unaided educational institutions, other institutions of higher learning and private industry would cause irreparable damage to the quality of education and to the efforts to achieve excellence and efficiency in industry. Private educational institutions as well as institutions of higher learning and industry should be allowed to function without quotas with the minimum of state interference. Politicians should not tamper with the Constitution or agitate over the Supreme Court ruling. Any defiance would be against the rule of law and would be detrimental to the interests of thousands of youth. The government should raise employment opportunities for backward classes to uplift them but not at the cost of efficiency and merit.

Jr docs step up quota heat on govt

Medical students erupt in Delhi, line up agitation for Kolkata

HT Correspondents

New Delhi/Kolkata, May 12

THE MEDICAL students' anti-quota stir, on a short fuse since the very beginning, exploded on the streets of Delhi on Friday when thousands of protesters tried to march to the PMO defying teargas, water cannons and masked RAF personnel out to stop them at any cost. The protest and the crackdown raised fears of similar unrest in Kolkata where medics threatened a massive state-wide agitation next week.

In Delhi, the protesters were slapped, roughed up and hosed with water canons as

they started marching from the Lady Hardinge Medical College towards the PMO to demand an assurance from the Prime Minister that the OBC quota proposed for higher-education institutions would not be implemented.

They marched down Connaught Place, broke security cordons near India Gate and headed towards South Block before police engaged them in a pitched battle near the National Museum on Janpath Road, making free use of batons and teargas. Hundreds of policemen took part in the action that left several students, including girls, severely injured. Many more protesters

courted arrest.

The students' point was: now that the elections were over and the government was not bound by the EC's code of conduct, it must come clean on the quota issue. They said merit would suffer if the quota proposal were implemented. HRD Minister Arjun Singh had earlier told them that he would speak on the issue after the polls.

In Kolkata, post-graduate trainee doctors, house staff and MBBS students at the state's nine medical colleges expressed solidarity with their agitating peers in Delhi. Students and members of the house staff at these teaching hospitals will meet at the

Medical College and Hospital on Saturday to discuss their plan of action against the Centre's decision. Dr Satyajit Das, house staff at Calcutta National Medical College and Hospital, said they would launch a state-wide movement within next week unless the Union HRD minister rolled back its decision.

Dr Kajal Banik, vice-president of the IMA's state branch, said, the IMA's central working committee would hold meetings on May 20 and 21 to finalise strategy. Banik said the IMA would go all out to stall the Centre's move to raise the quota by 27 per cent for OBC candidates.

13 MAY 2006

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

প্রয়োজনে আইন, বেসরকারি ক্ষেত্রে সংরক্ষণে অনাড় কেন্দ্র

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নমাদিল্লি, ১৩ মে: লাটিচার্জের পরে তাঁদের গাড়িতে চাপিয়ে নিয়ে যাচ্ছিল মুম্বই পুলিশ। জনলা দিয়ে ডাক্তারি ছাড়া চিংকার করছিলেন: "অর্জুন সিংহ হায় হায়!"

তখনও তাঁরা জানেন না, কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভায় নতুন সমর্থক পেয়ে গিয়েছেন সংরক্ষণ প্রস্তাবের হোতা মানব সম্পদ উন্নয়ন মন্ত্রী। তাঁর সেই সঙ্গী, বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী কমল নাথ আজ বুঝিয়ে দেন, উচ্চশিক্ষা নয়, বেসরকারি ক্ষেত্রেও সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে কিছু ইটহে না সরকার। প্রয়োজনে বেসরকারি ক্ষেত্রে সংরক্ষণ সুনিশ্চিত করতে আইন প্রণয়ন করা হবে।

অজুনের প্রস্তাবের প্রেক্ষিতে দেশ জুড়ে ছাত্রমহলে প্রতিবাদ-বিক্ষোভ শুরু হয়ে গিয়েছে। কমল নাথের বিবৃতি তার পরিধি বাড়িয়ে দেবে বলেই বিশ্বাস ওয়াকিবহাল মহলের।

আজ দিল্লি, মুম্বই, আমদাবাদ, কটক-সহ বিভিন্ন শহরে যে ভাবে

কিছু দিন পোহাতে হবে।

মুম্বইয়ে লাটিচার্জের পরে কিছুটা বেকায়দায় মহারাষ্ট্র সরকারও। স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী আর আর পাটিল মুম্বই পুলিশ কমিশনারকে ডেকে ওপরের নির্দেশ দিয়েছেন। সাত দিনের মধ্যে তাঁর রিপোর্টও দাখিল করতে বলেছেন। কিন্তু এই ঘটনাগ্রবাহ অর্জুন সিংহকে উচ্চ

শিক্ষায় সংরক্ষণের প্রস্তাব থেকে আন্দৌও সরাতে পারবে কি না, তাই নিয়ে প্রশ্ন থেকেই যাচ্ছে। কারণ, রামাবিলাস পাসোয়ান, নালুপ্রসাদ যাদবের মতো শরিকদের চাপে যে বেসরকারি চাকরির ক্ষেত্রেও সংরক্ষণের দিকে ঝুঁকছে, সেটা আজ কমলনাথের কথা থেকেই স্পষ্ট।

বাণিজ্যমন্ত্রী আজ বলেছেন, সিআইআই জনিয়েছে, প্রিন্সিপে পড়া

"বেসরকারি ক্ষেত্রে কর্মসংস্থানে

অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির মানুষকে সুবিধা দেওয়ার ব্যাপারে সরকার শিল্পমহলাকে প্রস্তাব দিয়েছে। এ ব্যাপারে তারা পেছায় কী ব্যবস্থা নেয়, তার অপেক্ষাতেই রয়েছে সরকার। কিন্তু তারা বাগ হলে সরকারকে আইন প্রণয়ন-সহ বিকল্প উপায় ভাবতে হবে।"

শিল্পমহলের এই আশ্বাসে অংশীদারদের সমস্যা একটুও কমেনা। সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে প্রাধান্যমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের বিশেষ সন্থাতি না থাকলেও আভিমান শ্রম কর্মসূচির ধরো তুলে সরকারকে এই নিয়ে চাপ দিচ্ছেন পাসোয়ান, নালুপ্রা। আভিমান কর্মসূচিতে

কিন্তু বেসরকারি ক্ষেত্রে সংরক্ষণের কথা বলা হয়েছিল। তাই বিখ্যাত নিয়ে এখন যাগেটই অসম্ভবত পড়েছে সরকার। আর মুখে মধ্যপন্থার কথা বললেও সরকারের বেকায়দায় পড়াটাকে উপভোগ করছে বিজেপি।

সমাজের জন্য শিল্প সংস্থাপন

এমনিতেই কিছু না কিছু করছে। সেই সঙ্গে বিখ্যাত নিয়ে চিহ্নাভাবনার জন্য সিআইআই দু'বছর সময় চেয়ে নিয়েছে। কমল নাথ অংশীদার বলেছেন, "পিছিয়ে পড়া মানুষদের জন্য ওরা এত দিন কী করেছেন, খাতায় কলমে হিসেব দেখিয়ে দিন।"

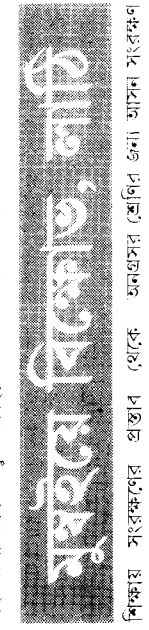
শিল্পমহলের এই আশ্বাসে অংশীদারদের সমস্যা একটুও কমেনা। সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে প্রাধান্যমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের বিশেষ সন্থাতি না থাকলেও আভিমান শ্রম কর্মসূচির ধরো তুলে সরকারকে এই নিয়ে চাপ দিচ্ছেন পাসোয়ান, নালুপ্রা। আভিমান কর্মসূচিতে

কিন্তু বেসরকারি ক্ষেত্রে সংরক্ষণের কথা বলা হয়েছিল। তাই বিখ্যাত নিয়ে এখন যাগেটই অসম্ভবত পড়েছে সরকার। আর মুখে মধ্যপন্থার কথা বললেও সরকারের বেকায়দায় পড়াটাকে উপভোগ করছে বিজেপি।

এই পরিস্থিতিতে সরকারের উপর

থেকে এই চাপ সরাতেই কমলনাথ আজ বলেন, সব উন্নয়নই শহর-কেন্দ্রিক। দেশে এমন ১০৪টি পিছিয়ে পড়া জেলা রয়েছে যেখানে তফসিলি জাতি, উপজাতি ও অন্যান্য অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির জনসংখ্যা ৫০ শতাংশেরও বেশি। এই এলাকাগুলিতে শিল্প স্থাপনের জন্য কর ছাড়-সহ একগুচ্ছ সুবিধা দিয়ে শিল্পমহলাকে উৎসাহিত করার কথা ভাবছে তাঁর মন্ত্রক। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে এ বিষয়ে তাঁর এখনও আলোচনা না হলেও আশা করা যায়, এই প্রস্তাবে কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভার অনুমোদন পাওয়া যাবে।

কিন্তু বাস্তব সুবিধা দিয়েও শিল্পমহলাকে সংরক্ষণমুখী করা যাবে কি না, তাই নিয়ে সন্দেহ রয়েছে খোদ মন্ত্রীরাই। আইন প্রণয়নের উপরে জোর দিয়ে পরোক্ষে সেটাই স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছেন তিনি।



Kalam for more seats

Sets a target of 14% outlay in higher education system

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 13

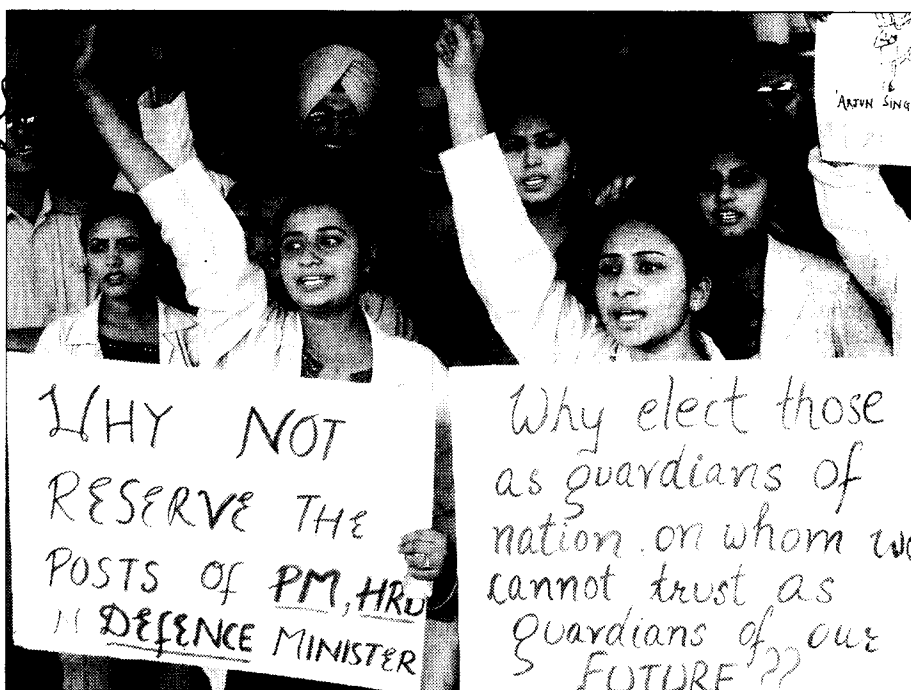
PITCHING FOR an improvement in the quality of education, especially in the centres of higher learning, President APJ Abdul Kalam has suggested a quantum jump in the number of seats so as to cater to the requirements of the nation's knowledge industry. "I have developed a system of global human resource cadre to cater to the needs of knowledge industry", Kalam said in his address to the Grassroot Summit organised by the Press Institute of India here on Friday.

The President's remarks assume significance against the backdrop of the ongoing reservation controversy in the elite academic institutes.

Maintaining that the youth across the country faced the twin problems of quality education and unemployment, Kalam said the challenge could be met by ensuring larger number of seats in the institutes of higher learning, such as engineering, medicine and specialised sciences. Setting a target of a 14 per cent investment in the higher education system by 2015 from the existing 6 per cent, the President hoped that these resources could peak to 30 and 50 per cent by 2020 and 2040, respectively.

Describing the need for more vacancies for students in the centres of higher learning as a 'Mission' that could be accomplished through public-private partnership, Kalam made a pointed reference to India's rapidly growing 500-plus million under 25 population. "The universities can set up special cadres to meet future demands of skilled and qualified young men and women both for within and outside the country", he remarked.

Elaborating on the specific aspects of the 'Mission', Kalam said the universities and educational systems should create two cadres of personnel — a global cadre of skilled youth with special knowledge of special skills and another global cadre of youth with higher education. "These two cadres will be required not only for powering the manufacturing and service sectors in India but will also be needed for fulfilling the human resource needs of various other countries", he added.



Government Medical College students demonstrate in Amritsar on Saturday.

PTI

JD(U) chief targets Pitroda

AS THE Mandal-II era confrontation between the supporters and opponents of reservation intensified, an aggressive JD(U) chief Sharad Yadav unleashed a bitter attack against the members of the Sam Pitroda-led National Knowledge Commission for opposing quota in central institutes of higher education.

Yadav, who was in the forefront of the move to implement Mandal Commission recommendations for OBCs under the V.P. Singh government, shot off a strong letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh demanding that the commission be wound up as it had overstepped its brief and was act-

ing like a "political pressure group".

Targetting chairman Pitroda, in particular, he accused him of showing scant regard for democratic institutions and process and "behaving like a political leader". Six of the eight-member panel had recently opposed reservations in institutions of higher learning.

"I can understand the opposition from the general category students because their opportunities of admission to elite institutes will be reduced. But I fail to understand how a commission constituted by you can challenge our Constitution and the decision taken by Parliament". **HTC**

4 MAY 2006

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Medical students begin hunger strike

Indian Medical Association calls for "total medical bandh" on Monday

Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI: Medical students began an indefinite hunger strike at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences here on Sunday to protest against the Government's move to increase reservation in higher education.

Resident doctors have been abstaining from work for the past three days, affecting emergency services in some government hospitals.

Health services are expected to get worse on Monday in view of a call for a "total medical bandh" in the city given by the Indian Medical Association.

The Government has pro-

posed to reserve 27 per cent of the seats in Central universities and institutes of higher learning for Other Backward Classes.

Around 100 medical students and representatives of resident doctors of five premier medical colleges — AIIMS, Maulana Azad Medical College, Lady Harding Medical College, University College of Medical Sciences and Vardhaman Mahavir Medical College — are taking part in the hunger strike.

"We will continue our hunger strike and will not attend duty," said Vinod Patro of the AIIMS Resident Doctors' Association.

The doctors are angry over the police excesses in Delhi and

Mumbai and have demanded an apology from the Government and the police.

Strategy planned

Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry has drawn up a strategy to ensure smooth running of health services in the Capital's hospitals in the wake of a strike by the doctors on Monday against the proposed reservation for Other Backward Classes in medical colleges. The Ministry has asked the Medical Superintendents to ensure that medical facilities are not disrupted. "Services in the government hospitals will be

maintained," Union Health and Family Welfare Secretary P.K. Hota told reporters here on Sunday after a meeting in which the situation due to the ongoing doctors strike was discussed. Mr. Hota said the Ministry had drawn the attention of medical superintendents of the Capital's hospitals to a directive of the Supreme Court that prohibits doctors from disrupting services. Medical Superintendents have been asked to convey the message to the striking residents and maintain services in the hospitals, he added.

"We have also appealed to doctors and students to not to disrupt medical services as it

causes inconvenience to patients," Mr. Hota said.

Meanwhile, the Central Government Health Services (CGHS) doctors are being redeployed in the hospitals to maintain services, while hospitals have been asked to create an emergency duty system, pressing into service senior faculty and specialists. Officials said all important wings of the hospitals would function during the strike. The Government has asked CGHS beneficiaries to also take health services from private hospitals. The strike by resident doctors is expected to cause a major disruption of health services on Monday.

9/11/75
9/11/75
9/11/75

Arjun rejects relook at quota issue

FD-1

15/5

J. Carver & Borden

“It is for Cabinet to decide”

NEW DELHI: Unfazed by protests against OBC quota, Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh on Sunday rejected suggestions of a relook into reservation in elite educational institutions. He said it was up to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to decide when to bring the matter before the Cabinet.

“This is entirely for the Cabinet to decide. As soon as the Prime Minister allows it come in the Cabinet, a decision will be taken,” he told reporters when asked whether a bill in this regard would come up in the ongoing brief session of Parliament.

Mr. Singh dismissed as “propaganda” the attempts to project the anti-reservation agitation as “Mandal II”. “There is no Mandal II, III or IV. It is all propaganda to vitiate the whole atmosphere.” He, however, said he was ready to talk to the agitating students.

Slams knowledge commission

Slamming the National Knowledge Commission headed by Sam Pitroda, he said: “well, with all due respect to the great Knowledge Commission, I must point out to them that they are not above the Constitution.

“They do not need to speak to any of us. Let them decide and the country will follow them if they are above the Constitution. They do not know that there is a Parliament and there is a law passed by Parliament also. If they are unaware, then I can on-

ly pity them,” he said.

On the observation of party leader Rahul Gandhi that both favouring and opposing the quota had “valid points,” he said a middle path could only be found in a calm and cool atmosphere and not when lathis were used by one side and slogans by the other.

Asked about the strategy he would adopt in the wake of the ongoing agitation, he said there was no strategy and what was needed was an understanding. “If there is no understanding in society, no strategy works. The issue can be resolved through talks. If those who did not get anything, they have to be given something, which is to be decided”, he said.

The Minister parried several questions, saying he would give clarifications, if asked, in the Cabinet and Parliament. “I cannot give anything outside”.

Mr. Singh rubbished the demand from a group of party MPs, led by Ajit Jogi, that Sonia Gandhi take over as Prime Minister in the wake of her recent massive win from Rae Bareilly, and that Rahul Gandhi be given the reins of the party. He said he did not agree with it “even a bit”.

Ms. Gandhi had nipped in the bud the demand, saying “this talk is not proper. There should not be such talk in the party.” — PTI

See also Page 12

15 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

বাড়ছে বিক্ষোভ, জট পাকাচ্ছে সংরক্ষণ-প্রশ্ন

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৪
মে: মুম্বইয়ের জন্য দিল্লি, দিল্লির জন্য
পঞ্জাব। আর মুম্বই এবং দিল্লির জন্য
বাস্কালোর।

শুধু গোটা দেশ জুড়ে সংরক্ষণ-
বিরোধী আন্দোলন ছড়িয়ে পড়া নয়,
মুম্বইয়ে ডাক্তারি ছাত্রদের উপরে
পুলিশের লাঠির প্রতিবাদে দিল্লিতে
জুনিয়র ডাক্তার ও ছাত্রদের অনশন
ধর্মঘট অথবা দিল্লিতে পুলিশি জুলুমের
ঘটনায় অমৃতসরে ডাক্তারি ছাত্রদের
প্রতীকী অনশন— সব মিলিয়ে
সংরক্ষণ-বিতর্ক ক্রমেই আরও ঘোরালো
হচ্ছে। কাল গোটা দেশে ধর্মঘটের ডাক
দিয়েছে ইন্ডিয়ান মেডিক্যাল
অ্যাসোসিয়েশন (আই এম এ)।

কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার অবশ্য এখনও
নিজের অবস্থানে স্থির। জুনিয়র ডাক্তার
এবং ছাত্রদের ধর্মঘটের কোনও প্রভাব
যাতে স্বাস্থ্য পরিষেবার উপরে না-পড়ে,
তার জন্য কেন্দ্রীয় স্বাস্থ্য মন্ত্রক
রাজধানীর বিভিন্ন হাসপাতালের
সুপারদের নির্দেশ পাঠিয়েছে।
ছুটি বাতিল করা হয়েছে সব

সিনিয়র ডাক্তারের।
কেন্দ্রীয় মানবসম্পদ
উন্নয়নমন্ত্রী অর্জুন
সিংহও দায়িত্ব নিজের
কাঁধে রাখতে নারাজ।
সংসদে বিষয়টি
তোলা হবে কি না,
জানতে চাইলে বল
প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কোর্টে
ঠেলে দিয়ে অর্জুন
বলেছেন, “এটা
পুরোপুরি মন্ত্রিসভার
উপরে নির্ভর করছে।
প্রধানমন্ত্রী যখন
চাইবেন, তখনই
বিষয়টি মন্ত্রিসভায়
তোলা হবে।” একই
সঙ্গে নলেজ
কমিশনের সংরক্ষণ-
বিরোধী অবস্থানেরও
তীর সমালোচনা
করেছেন কেন্দ্রীয়
মন্ত্রী। তাঁর কথায়,
“নলেজ কমিশনের
সদস্যদের মনে রাখা

উচিত, তাঁরা সংবিধানের উপরে নন।”

তবে সব চেয়ে আশ্চর্যজনক ভাবে
চূপ রাজনৈতিক দলগুলি। বাম কিংবা
বিরোধীরা, কেউই সংরক্ষণ-বিতর্ক
নিয়ে মুখ খুলছেন না। ছাত্রদের উপরে
পুলিশি ‘অত্যাচার’-এর পর্যন্ত প্রতিবাদ
জানায়নি কোনও দল। সংশ্লিষ্ট মহলের
ধারণা, এক দিকে অনগ্রসর শ্রেণি, অন্য
দিকে ছাত্রসমাজ, কোনও
ভোটব্যাঙ্কেই চটাতে তৈরি নন
রাজনীতিকেরা। তাই রাহুল গাঁধী নিজে
যেমন বলেছেন, ‘সংরক্ষণের পক্ষে
এবং বিপক্ষে, দু’দিকেই যুক্তি রয়েছে’,
ঠিক তেমন ‘মধ্যপন্থা’ অবলম্বন করে
চলছে বিভিন্ন দল। তবে রাজনৈতিক
দলগুলির এই নীরবতা স্বাভাবিক বলে
মেনে নিলেও প্রধানমন্ত্রী ও রাষ্ট্রপতির
নীরবতায় প্রতিবাদরত ছাত্রেরা অবাক।
মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে কথা বলতে
চেয়ে তিন-তিন বার ফাঙ্গ করা সত্ত্বেও
‘ইউথ ফর ইকুয়ালিটি’-র দাবি,
প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দফতর থেকে সামান্য
আশ্বাসটুকুও পাওয়া যায়নি। কংগ্রেস
এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

আজ ধর্মঘটে আইএমএ



প্রতিবাদে অটল। রবিবার বাস্কালোরে। — এ এফ পি

15 MAY 2006

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Stop brutality against docs: BJP, CPM

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, May 15: The BJP today said it was not against reservation in higher educational institutions but was opposed to any brutal action against the agitating doctors over the issue.

Party spokesman Mr VK Malhotra demanded the government call a meeting of doctors to sort out the matter. He asked Congress-ruled states to desist from using force against the protesting doctors. He said the government should talk to the students and address their apprehensions and strike a balance between the merit of students and constitutional provision on OBC quota before taking a final decision on

reservation in higher institutions.

The party condemned the brutal treatment being meted out to the agitating doctors. It demanded action against police personnel responsible for committing atrocities on peaceful protesters. The party apparently is in a catch-22 situation. It seems to sympathise with the agitating doctors' protests against OBC quota in higher institutions but can do little to come out in support of their cause. Reason: the fear of being seen on the wrong side of the political fence on the issue of reservation.

Quizzed by the media over the party's stand on doctors' agitation, Mr Malhotra said: "We are

not against reservation as such." He, however, stressed that the government should first clarify its stand on the matter. He wanted to know if the government would go for an increase in seats or what steps it planned to take in this regard. He said all the issues being raised by doctors had to be addressed.

Politically the BJP does not want to be seen opposing reservation by taking any categorical stand against it. Mr Malhotra said the BJP would give its reaction only after the government had brought the matter to Parliament. The party in the mean time decided to raise the matter during zero hour tomorrow in Parliament. It has already

given a notice to this effect to the Speaker.

CPI condemnation: The CPI-M today condemned the lathicharge on medical students on the reservation issue, but accused "a section of the media" of whipping up emotions on the issue by giving it excessive attention. Party leaders Mr Basudeb Acharia and Mohammed Salim told reporters the lathicharge on the medical students reminded people of the brutal lathicharge on Honda workers in Gurgaon recently.

"We do sympathise with the students but will appeal to them not to fall a victim to the casteist lobby," Mr Salim said. A section of the media was spending "plenty of time and energy" on it.

16 MAY 2006

THE STATESMAN

Medicos want to ^{16/5} meet PM, ^{Centre of} ^{Benaru} not Arjun

NEW DELHI, May 15: Striking medical students today rejected the Union human resources development minister, Mr Arjun Singh's invitation for talks on the reservation issue. They said that they had lost faith in him and now wanted to meet the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, to resolve the issue.

"He (Singh) had assured us that he would hold talks with us before referring the Bill on reservation to the Union Cabinet. But he did not do that and we now have no faith in him," said a representative of the Youth for Equality, Safal.

The students, who began an indefinite hunger-strike here yesterday, said they wanted to talk only to the Prime Minister on the issue, which had brought them on a collision course with the government.

Their strident posture comes in the wake of Mr Singh's statement that he was ready to hold talks with the students protesting against the proposed reservations for OBCs in elite educational institutions, if they are willing to come forward for discussions.



"But we do not want the invitation for talks via media. Only when we get it in written format will we go ahead or let the Prime Minister talk to us," said the joint secretary, resident doctors association, AIIMS, Dr Arnab Pal.

Mr Arjun Singh had earlier told the students that he had no problems discussing the issue with them before the Bill was taken up by Parliament, but he would consult the PM before any such meeting. ■ SNS

THE S...

16 MAY 2006

আন্দোলনকারী ছাত্রদের পাশে শিক্ষকেরা

ক্রমশ ছড়াচ্ছে বিক্ষোভ, আঁচ পশ্চিমবঙ্গেও

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, কলকাতা ও নয়াদিল্লি, ১৫ মে: এইমসের ছাত্রীটি অনশনে বসেছিলেন সহপাঠীদের সঙ্গে। আজ, অনশন ধর্মঘটের দ্বিতীয় দিনে হঠাৎই তিনি অসুস্থ হয়ে পড়েন। তাঁকে সঙ্গে সঙ্গে ভর্তি করা হয় হাসপাতালের জরুরি বিভাগে। এক জন নয়, এইমসের অনশনরত ছাত্র-ছাত্রীদের মধ্যে আজ সাত জন অসুস্থ হয়ে পড়েন। তাঁদের মধ্যে চার জন মহিলা। সবাইকে এইমসে ভর্তি করা হয়েছে। তবে সহপাঠীদের শারীরিক অবস্থা নিয়ে চিন্তিত হলেও অনশন ধর্মঘট থেকে সরেননি এইমসের ছাত্র ও জুনিয়র ডাক্তারেরা।

অন্য ক্ষেত্রে ধীরে চলার নীতি নিলেও এইমসের ক্ষেত্রে সরকার কড়া হওয়ারই সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে। আন্দোলনকারীদের নোটস পাঠানো হয়েছে, অবিলম্বে কাজে যোগ দিন, নয়তো কড়া ব্যবস্থা। কেন্দ্রীয় স্বাস্থ্যমন্ত্রী অম্বুমণি রামডাস আজ বলেছেন, “জুনিয়র ও পদস্থ আবাসিক চিকিৎসকেরা যদি অবিলম্বে কাজে যোগ না দেন, তবে তাঁদের জায়গায় আমাদের নতুন লোক খুঁজতে হবে... চাকরির চুক্তিপত্রেরই সে কথা বলা রয়েছে... কোনও এক সকালে উঠে মনে হল আর কাজে এলেন না— না, এটা গুঁরা করতে পারেন না।” হাসপাতাল চত্বরে বিক্ষোভকারীদের বসতে দেওয়ার জন্য এইমসের ডিরেক্টর (বেণু গোপালের বরখাস্তের দাবি তুলেছে সংরক্ষণ-পন্থী ফ্রন্ট) এইমসকে সরকারের এই ষ্টিশিয়ারি কিন্তু সংরক্ষণের বিরুদ্ধে চিকিৎসক-মহলের এই ক্ষোভকে আটকাতে পারেনি। ছাত্র ও জুনিয়র ডাক্তারদের সঙ্গে যোগ দিয়েছেন আবাসিক চিকিৎসকেরা, বেসরকারি হাসপাতালের ডাক্তাররাও। দিল্লি-মুম্বইয়ের সঙ্গে আন্দোলনে যোগ দিয়েছে বডোদরা, অমৃতসর। পশ্চিমবঙ্গেও।

উত্তরবঙ্গের পরে বাঁকুড়া, উত্তরবঙ্গ ছাড়িয়ে আন্দোলন মেদিনীপুর, এমনকী কলকাতাতেও ছড়িয়েছে। মেডিক্যাল কলেজ ও ন্যাশনাল মেডিক্যাল কলেজে-সহ কলকাতার একাধিক কলেজে চলেছে ক্লাস বয়কট। বাঁকুড়ায় আড়াই ঘন্টা পথ আটকে বিক্ষোভ দেখান ছাত্রেরা। কাল কলকাতায় বের হচ্ছে প্রতিবাদ মিছিলও।

নতুন কয়েকটি ক্ষেত্র থেকেও সমর্থন পাচ্ছেন আন্দোলনকারী ছাত্র ও জুনিয়র ডাক্তাররা। তারা পাশে রয়েছে, আগেই জানিয়েছিল আইএমএ। এ বার সরকার ইতিবাচক ব্যবস্থা না-নিলে ২৫ তারিখ দেশ জুড়ে চিকিৎসা-বন্থের হুমকিও দিল তারা। আজ কলকাতায় প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজ ও যাদবপুরের ছাত্রমহল জানিয়ে দিল, তারাও পাশে রয়েছে। এইমসের আন্দোলনকারীরা পাশে পেয়ে গেলেন শিক্ষক-চিকিৎসকদের। শিক্ষকরা বলেছেন, ছাত্রদের এই ধর্মঘট থেকে সরে আসা উচিত নয়। তাঁরা বৃহস্পতিবার ‘কাল দিবস’ পালনেরও সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছেন।

নিজেদের অবস্থানে ছাত্রেরা কতটা অনড়, প্রমাণ মিলেছে মুম্বইয়ে। দু’দিন আগে আন্দোলনকারীদের উপরে লাঠিচার্জের তদন্ত শুরু করেই সেই সময় কর্তব্যরত ইন্সপেক্টর এস শঙ্ককে সাসপেন্ড করেছে পুলিশ। তাতে সন্তুষ্ট নন ছাত্রেরা। তাঁদের দাবি, ‘দোষী’ সব ক’জন পুলিশকেই শাস্তি দিতে হবে। তবে সপ্তাহের আন্দোলনের পরে ‘সাময়িক ভাবে’ বিক্ষোভ থেকে সরে এসেছেন কনিটিকের ডাক্তারি ও ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং কলেজের ছাত্রেরা।

ছাত্র ও ডাক্তারদের আন্দোলনে সাধারণ মানুষের হেনস্থা বেড়েছে। গত কয়েক দিন সরকারি হাসপাতাল রোগীদের বেসরকারি হাসপাতালের পথ দেখিয়েছিল। কিন্তু আজ সেখানেও প্রায় একই অবস্থা। সংরক্ষণের বিরোধিতা করেও তাই রোগীদের প্রশ্ন, “আমরা তবে কোথায় যাব?”

ছাত্রদের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় তৈরি সরকার, জানিয়েছেন অর্জুন সিংহ। তিনি বলেন, “কথা বলতে আমি তৈরি। তারা না এলে কথা হবে কী করে?”

আন্দোলনের গতির সঙ্গে সামঞ্জস্য রেখেই অর্জুনের এই প্রস্তাব খারিজ করেছেন ছাত্রেরা।

পিছু না হটেও বোঝাতে সময় নিচ্ছে সরকার

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৫ মে: ছাত্রদের ক্ষোভ কমাতে সংরক্ষণের প্রকৃতি নিয়ে ধীরে চলার নীতি নিল সরকার।

সংবিধান সংশোধিত হয়ে গিয়েছে। সংরক্ষণ প্রশ্নে এর পর যে সরকারকে অর্জুন সিংহের ঘোষিত পথেই উচ্চশিক্ষা ক্ষেত্রেও অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির জন্য সংরক্ষণের ব্যবস্থা করতে হবে, তাতেও সংশয় নেই। কিন্তু সমস্যা তৈরি করেছে দেশব্যাপী ছাত্র-বিক্ষোভ। সেই কারণেই সরকার কিছুটা সময় নিতে চাইছে। আজ রাতে ৯০ মিনিটের কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভার রাজনীতি বিষয়ক কমিটির বৈঠকের সময়েও ছাত্রদের কথা মাথায় রাখা হয়। পরে সরকারের পক্ষ থেকে বলা হয়েছে, সমাজের সব শ্রেণির কল্যাণের বিষয়টি মাথায় রেখে শীঘ্রই সিদ্ধান্ত জানানো হবে। তবে এর জন্য সময়সীমা বেঁধে দেওয়া হয়নি।

বৈঠকের পর প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় বলেন, “যারা বিক্ষোভ দেখাচ্ছে তারা আমাদেরই সম্মান। তারা বিক্ষোভ তুলে নিক। সরকার সকলের স্বার্থ বজায় রেখেই সিদ্ধান্ত নেবে।” এই বিষয়ে খুঁটিনাটি খুব শীঘ্রই চূড়ান্ত করা হবে বলেও তিনি জানিয়েছেন। এর জন্য কোনও কমিশন বা মন্ত্রীগোষ্ঠীকে দায়িত্ব দেওয়া হবে না।

সরকারের অভিন্ন ন্যূনতম কর্মসূচি অনুযায়ী সংরক্ষণ আরও প্রসারিত করার প্রস্তাব দিয়েছিলেন অর্জুন। কিন্তু বিষয়টি নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ বা কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রী সনিয়া গাঁধী এত দিন প্রকাশ্যে কিছুই বলেননি। এমনকী, আজ সকালে কংগ্রেস সংসদীয় দলের বৈঠকেও সনিয়া এ সম্পর্কে মন্তব্য করেননি। উচ্চশিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলিতে আসন বাড়িয়ে সংরক্ষণ ব্যবস্থা চালু করার কথাই যে

ভাবছে কেন্দ্র, রাতে বৈঠকের পরে অবশ্য সে ইস্যুটি স্পষ্ট হয়ে যায়। প্রণবও বলেন, “আপনারা জানেন, অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির জন্য সংরক্ষণের ব্যবস্থা করতে সংবিধান সংশোধন করা হয়ে গিয়েছে।”

সংরক্ষণ বিরোধী ছাত্র-আন্দোলন যে ভাবে ছড়িয়ে পড়ছে, তাতে এই মুহূর্তে জাতপাতের প্রশ্নে সামাজিক বিভেদ-বিবেচনা-বিশ্লেষণের ব্যতীত তৈরি হওয়ার আশঙ্কা ভুগছে ইউপিএ সরকার। একই সঙ্গে ছাত্রদের সঙ্গে সংঘাতের পথও এড়িয়ে চলতে চাইছে তারা। তাই সংরক্ষণ হবে কি হবে না, সেই প্রশ্নটিকে আপাতত পিছনের আসনে রেখে মনমোহন মন্ত্রিসভার প্রথম ও প্রধান লক্ষ্য, ছাত্র বিক্ষোভ প্রশমন।

বস্তুত, সেই কথা মাথায় রেখেই আজ সন্ধ্যায় আচমকা কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভার রাজনীতি বিষয়ক কমিটির বৈঠক ডাকেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ ভাবে অর্জুন সিংহ যেমন এই কমিটির সদস্য, তেমনি এতে লালু প্রসাদ, দয়ানিধি মারান, টি আর বাবুর মতো সংরক্ষণপন্থী নেতারাও রয়েছেন কমিটিতে।

বৈঠকের আগেই কমিটির এক সদস্যের কথায় সরকারের মূল ভাবনাটি স্পষ্ট হয়ে যায়। আন্দোলনকারী ছাত্রদের সঙ্গে সংঘাতে যেতে নারাজ, কিন্তু সরবে না সংরক্ষণের পথ থেকেও। এই অবস্থায় সরকার সময় কিনতে চাইছে। তাদের ধারণা, এই সময়টাই সব দিক বাঁচিয়ে দেবে। ছাত্রদের বিক্ষোভও সামলে দেওয়া যাবে। আবার মন বোঝা যাবে রাজনৈতিক দলগুলির।

সংরক্ষণ থেকে এখন পিছনের কোনও উপায়ই নেই সরকারের। তাই তাদের তরফে রাজনৈতিক দলগুলিকে বোঝানোর প্রয়াসও শুরু হয়ে গিয়েছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দফতর সূত্রের খবর, ইতিমধ্যেই মনমোহন সিংহ শরিক দলগুলির সঙ্গে কথা বলতে শুরু করেছেন। আজকের বৈঠকেও একপ্রশ্ন চেষ্টা চলে। সরকারের লক্ষ্য, প্রথমে বুঝিয়ে রাজি করাতে হবে শরিক দলগুলিকে। তার পর ইউপিএ সমর্থক এবং বিরোধী রাজনৈতিক নেতৃবৃন্দের সঙ্গেও আলোচনা করবেন মনমোহন সিংহ।

এর পর সাতের পাতায়



প্রতিবাদের প্রস্তুতি। সোমবার মেডিক্যাল কলেজে। — নিজস্ব চিত্র

Govt studying all quota options, says Arjun

New Delhi: In the face of mounting protests, HRD minister Arjun Singh on Tuesday said government was "not unmindful" of concerns expressed by agitating students against reservations in elite educational institutions and that it was seriously considering all options that will also satisfy them.

He, however, made it clear in the Lok Sabha that government was committed to implementing the proposal on reservations and no timeframe could be given as it was considering a number of suggestions.

"I would like to assure the Lok Sabha that we are concerned about this issue. And it is not as if we are unmindful of the fact that a section of the people or the students feel that something is being taken away from them. I would like to dispel that impression. We are very seriously considering all the options that could give help to those sections of the people or the community who have at the moment acquired a certain stake in the entire thing," he said replying to supplementaries during question hour.

Stating that the reservation was a commitment of parliament, which had passed the 93rd constitution amendment bill for the purpose in December 2005, and was "irrevocable", Singh said a proposal to implement this was being considered in tandem with other provisions of the law.

He promised to get back to the house with a "comprehensive road-map to ensure what the house wants in this context." He said "canards" were being spread by certain sections that he was pushing it as his personal agenda.

Singh said an effort was being made to "accommodate" the section of society that was agitated and all options were being considered. This was also the view of the cabinet committee on political affairs that met on Monday evening. He strongly disapproved use of force by police saying that "force should not have been used on the students. They have a right to make their demands in a peaceful manner."

"There is no intention of the government to promote or slight any particular section of society. But agitation or violence is not a solution. Some people are inclined to this. But this will not be in the interest of the nation. We should consider the issue with a cool head," he said. "I want to assure the house the commitment of the government and I as a servant of the government will see that it is implemented." Singh said. AGENCIES



HELPING HAND: One of the medical students who fainted under a scorching sun during a hunger strike at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi on Tuesday being helped by his colleague

Pro-quota groups take to streets

New Delhi: The anti-reservation stir spread on Tuesday, crippling services in state-run hospitals in the national capital and other places even as groups demanding a quota for OBCs also took to the streets.

As medical students and junior doctors continued their protests in Delhi, Bihar, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Goa, Tripura, Madhya Pradesh and other states, pro-reservation bodies like the OBC Mahapanchayat joined the fray and staged rallies in support of the proposed quota, saying it was the only way to ensure quality education for poor students.

Activists of the OBC Mahapanchayat and All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaj staged a sit-in at Jantar Mantar here to demand implementation of the proposed 27 per cent quota for OBCs in elite educational institutions. Over 400 activists of the Mahatma Phule Samta Parishad, the outfit for OBCs floated by NCP leader and Maharashtra minister Chhagan Bhujbal, also courted arrest after a demonstration in Mumbai.

There were also calls for the medical students to call off their stir. While speaker Somnath Chatterjee appealed

to them to withdraw their protest, the medical community of Tamil Nadu led by the Doctors Association for Social Equality said the agitation was "completely unethical" as the medicos had "deserted patients".

In most places, emergency services and out-patient departments were maintained by senior doctors and house

surgeons as thousands of patients faced problems in hospitals attached to government medical colleges. PMK chief S Ramadoss, who arrived in Delhi to meet OBC leaders to get their support for the proposed reservations, met Congress president Sonia Gandhi and asked her to ensure that the quota bill

was introduced in the current session of Parliament. He said she had given a "very positive" response.

Resident doctors in Delhi's hospitals continued their indefinite strike for the fourth day, demanding the immediate roll back of the quota proposal. "Not a single resident has reported for duty today," said Subrato Mandal of the Resident Doctors Association of the prestigious All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). AGENCIES



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Anti-reservation stir intensifies

Pro-quota groups also take to the streets, court arrest

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"Deserted patients"

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In most places, emergency

• Delhi Government issued notices to junior doctors

• MBBS students in Madhya Pradesh tonsured their heads

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services and out-patient departments were maintained by senior doctors and house surgeons as thousands of patients faced problems in hospitals attached to Government medical colleges. Resident doctors in Delhi's hospitals continued their indefinite strike for the fourth day, demanding an immediate roll-back of the quota proposal. "Not a single resident has reported on duty today," said Subrato Mandal of the Resident Doctors' Association of the prestigious All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

With medical services in the Capital hit badly, the Delhi Government issued notices to junior doctors to rejoin duty or face ac-

streets to protest the quota proposal, partially crippling essential health services. In Patna, protesters burnt an effigy of HRD Minister Arjun Singh and disrupted traffic.

There were also reports of medicos adopting novel means to oppose the proposed quota. While some students of the Gandhi Medical College in Madhya Pradesh shaved their heads, those of the VSS Medical College in Orissa pulled rickshaws in Burla town. Medicos in Rajasthan observed a token strike.

Protestors put up barricades on the Jawaharlal Nehru Road in Jaipur and jammed traffic for an hour. There were also protests in Bikaner, Ajmer, Kota, Udaipur and Jodhpur.

In Tripura, students of the Government Medical College in Agartala boycotted classes while students in Goa announced they would go on strike on Wednesday. — PTI

tion. Officials said OPD services were functioning at 30 per cent of the normal capacity and an action plan had been framed to ensure the ICU, emergency, casualty and trauma services were not affected.

Services affected

Services in hospitals across Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh were affected as medicos, paramedical staff and doctors continued their protest.

Students of Mullana Medical College in Ambala blocked the Ambala-Haridwar road while an MBBS student in Amritsar on hunger strike fell critically ill and was admitted to hospital. In Bihar, the students took to the

Ministers panel to study quota issue

J. Carlin & P. ...

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It will take into account the interests of all sections

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Government on Wednesday decided to set up an informal committee of ministers to help evolve a "mechanism" to sort out the reservation tangle taking into account the views and interests of various sections.

Union Ministers Pranab Mukherjee, Arjun Singh and P. Chidambaram would be asked to find a way that would satisfy the need to go in for affirmative action through reservation for the socially and educationally backward sections and maintain an overall balance, highly placed sources in the Government said here.

The Ministers would discuss and work out a mechanism as decided by the Government earlier. The sources said there was a possibility of consulting other political parties.

In a significant development, senior Congress leader and Union Minister Oscar Fernandes reached out to students of the medical community who have been agitating against reservation for the Other Backward Classes in institutes of higher learning. Meanwhile, the Backward Classes Parliamentary Forum decided to postpone its scheduled meeting on Wednesday following a request from the Government to wait for its decision.

Consensus

The Government told the Lok Sabha on Wednesday it would arrive at a consensus after taking into consideration all aspects of the issue and no one could have any objection if efforts were made to address the cause of tension. Stating this Human Re-

source Development Minister Arjun Singh emphasised that there was no question of going back on the Government's intention to implement the constitutional amendment passed by Parliament.

Responding to a calling attention motion, Mr. Singh denied that there were different voices in the Government on implementing its commitment to provide reservation to OBCs in IIMs, IITs and other higher educational institutions. The issue generated heat with frequent verbal clashes between members of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the ruling coalition benches leading to repeated warnings by Speaker Somnath Chatterjee.

Mr. Singh said there was no delay on the part of the Government to implement the amend-

ment. The Government could not proceed because of the Assembly elections and the model code of conduct enforced by the Election Commission.

On the suggestions to increase the number of seats, expand infrastructure, outlay or setting up more institutes of higher learning, he said the decision could not be taken in 24 hours.

Mr. Singh clarified that he would want to dispel the notion that the Government condones the kind of violence used against demonstrators.

Earlier, making a statement, he said, "The Central Government is aware of all views expressed in this regard and shall take an appropriate decision on this issue without, in any way, diluting the commitment arising out of the Constitutional Amendment in Article 15(5)."

Notice to 600 striking doctors

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry on Wednesday issued termination notices to over 600 striking senior resident doctors of the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences and three Central Government-run hospitals in the capital. They were given 24 hours to reply to the notice and advertisements for fresh recruitments would be issued in a couple of days, Ministry sources said.

The action came after the Delhi High Court issued notice to the Centre seeking to

know what alternative steps it took to provide health services to people. The notice was issued on a public interest litigation petition filed by the Bharatiya Dalit Sahitya.

The Ministry decided to waive the mandatory one-month notice for senior resident doctors, who are on a three-year contract. The notice period for those on probation is 24 hours. Doctors from the Army and the Railways are treating out-patients.

Health services in Delhi have been badly hit for the past four days following the strike.

OBC quota: stirring wider issues

In this country of vast socio-economic disparities and inequities, it is unjust and misleading to define merit in an academic fashion. Should there not be a way by which 'merit' is translated into actual relief for the millions of our people in rural and tribal areas?

Swami Agnivesh & Valson Thampu

THE ESCALATING stir by medical students against the implementation of the 93rd Amendment, which is now Article 15(5) of the Constitution, is as symptomatic as it is significant. No one, neither the academics nor the politicians, had any problem when the constitutional amendment enabling the state to make laws to empower the socially and economically disadvantaged sections, besides the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, was being made. But now that the stage of its implementation has come, the volcano of grievance has begun to erupt.

Of course, we are familiar with the excuse. Medicos, and those who justify and fuel their sense of grievance, argue that they did not know that this was in the offing! And the Knowledge Commission, with the iconic Sam Pitroda at its apex, may provide it a façade of legitimacy. But what this implies is indeed too significant to be glossed over. Doctors enjoy a significant place in society. "Next to God, doctor" is a popular saying in this country.

Doctors should be the custodians of the health not only of individuals but also of society. It is for this reason that medical ethics are more stringent than professional and business ethics in other sectors of service. But to serve society, one has to know it. To know is to engage; and to engage is to love. Very often ignorance results not from the dearth of information but from the lack of love. We are ignorant because we are indifferent. And we are indifferent largely because we are self-absorbed. Self-absorption implies an outlook that limits one's relationship to the larger context — the country in this instance — wholly to what one may get out of it. This implies blindness to what one can do for the country.

The natural outcome of this outlook is hypersensitivity to 'rights' and total insensitivity to 'duties'. For the medical fraternity, or any educated person, to confess they did not 'know' that the 93rd Amendment could have had this sort of implication is simply to expose themselves to ridicule. So the alibi of ignorance is unacceptable.

If it is not ignorance, what is it then? This brings us to the endemic problem in India: our appallingly poor track record in implementation. We have a plethora of progressive and pro-active laws. Our Constitution is one of the finest achievements of legislative wisdom anywhere in the world. We are almost there, but we will not make it. We dribble the ball with splendid adroitness up to the D and, then, dither. Our national score sheet would have made far better reading but for this.

Yet, it is not as though nothing has been implemented. The implementation index of a scheme or a policy remains sensitive to the social segment that is meant to benefit from it. Measures that benefit the privileged classes are less vulnerable to executive neglect or red tape. Correspondingly, it is far more difficult to implement policies that are likely to affect the advantages of the privileged segments of the society.

Honest governance

The mark of honest governance is the executive will to bridge the gulf between the letter and the spirit — between legislative mandate and executive action — of the Constitution. In the present case, the present government, especially Arjun Singh, the Human Resources Development Minister, needs to be commended for its clarity of vision and earnestness of purpose. We do



EMOTIVE ISSUE: Police remove a pro-reservation activist on Wednesday from the campus of the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, where doctors and medical students are staging a protest against increasing quotas. — PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY.

the nation a gross injustice in seeking to subvert the implementation of the Constitution on the apprehension either that merit is likely to be compromised in the process or that a party is likely to benefit electorally in its wake. To obstruct the initiatives of a government to implement a constitutional amendment is to legitimise bad governance as well as to widen the gulf between law and policy.

The generic issue here is not whether or not the 93rd Amendment should be implemented. It is, on the contrary, whether we can tolerate the rule of law or not. Our commitment to the rule of law is not proved when we root for it when upholding the rule of law is to our advantage. It is proved more authentically when we stand by it even when it is in conflict with our personal or class interests. The insistence of the medicos that Article 15(5) of the Constitution should not be implemented is, in principle, akin to the stance of the Sangh Parivar that matters pertaining to faith are above the law. What is equally disturbing is the indication that the intellectual and academic elite of this country are losing their faith in a fair debate. The quota issue could have been openly and objectively debated.

But that option was foreclosed and the way of coercion was adopted precipitously. This is worrisome because this is not a one-off instance. We have been watching sadly the erosion of a culture of robust debate in our parliamentary democracy. Rather than debate, issues are clinched by holding Parliament to ransom. A more alarming symptom of our contrived collective faith in violence, and the corresponding loss of faith in debate and dialogue, cannot be thought of. This is the road we should not, and cannot afford, to take.

The anxiety that the proposed reservation for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) will subvert merit seems plausible but is, in fact, purblind. Much depends on what we mean by merit. In this country of vast socio-economic disparities and inequities, it is unjust and misleading to define merit in an academic fashion. Shall we not say that merit, in the context of health care, should also include compassion and the spirit of service? Should there not be a way by which 'merit' is translated into actual relief for the millions of our people in rural and tribal areas?

The time has come for us to consider making rural and tribal placements, at least for a period of three years, compulsory for all

prospective doctors. A doctor who is indifferent to social justice is an aberration. Also, there is no reason why the state should subsidise the medical education of the rich, mostly to enable them to find greener pastures abroad or in lucrative private practice in the metropolises. The cost of medical education must be indexed to the paying capacity of students.

Shocking events, one after the other, in recent times alert us to the ethical degradation that the medical profession is going through. The fact that medical students can, without any qualms, resort to sharpening the edges of their demands with the suffering of the people, by boycotting work, needs to be seen a symptom of this larger malady.

The root of ethical behaviour is the ability to see one's interests in harmony with the larger interests. Upsetting this ethical balance, this human equilibrium, in the interest of protecting one's own sectarian or class interests is a trend that needs to be seen clearly for what it portends for the society as a whole.

It strikes at the root of creating a wholesome social order without which neither merit nor progress makes any sense.

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The reservation impasse

A way needs to be found to relate eligibility for reservation to economic status but with provision for preferential treatment for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, and the Other Backward Classes.

A. Vaidyanathan

THE CENTRAL plank of the current agitation against reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes in admissions to higher education is that it discriminates against merit and will result in further deterioration of quality. It is significant that the agitation at this time is spearheaded mainly by the medical students and doctors with some support from their cohorts in IITs and IIMs. Their concern for merit as the primary criterion for access is touching. But success in entrance tests for professional colleges is far from a reliable indicator of 'merit'.

It is well known that most of the youth who are in higher education institutions, or aspiring to join them, belong to the top 5 or 10 per cent of households. Aspirants for higher-level professional courses are even more concentrated in this class. They come from families that can afford to send them to better, often private, schools; spend substantial amounts on private coaching both for secondary school examinations and for entrance tests.

On all these counts the rest of the population, and especially the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, and the Other Backward Classes, is at a serious disadvantage. They do not have the means to keep their children in school beyond the middle stage, and the small minority that manages to do so can only send them to government schools. None can afford private coaching. Despite these handicaps, a sizeable number — much larger than is recognised — of children from

these groups manage to do well, and some very well, in public exams. But their family means do not even allow them the luxury of even thinking of higher education.

Irrefutable rationale

It is only fair that a society committed to democracy, social justice, and equality of opportunity must take special measures to at least mitigate this disadvantage. This is the basic and irrefutable rationale for reservation.

This does not mean that reservation as practised so far or the proposed extension of its scope to professional education is the correct strategy. It has not significantly reduced the disparities in access to education both in schools and at higher levels. Moreover, reservation in higher education as a whole and in professional courses in particular has focussed exclusively on caste as the criterion of backwardness and created strong pressures for widening the scope of the OBCs. This has led to the cornering of the benefits of reservation by the better off segments, the so-called creamy layer, of these castes.

There is, therefore, a strong case for addressing these anomalies and restructuring reservation. There can be no compromise on the basic principle that public policy should take purposive and effective measures to help the socially and economically disadvantaged segments in accessing quality education. But caste, and only certain categories at that, should not be the sole criterion for affirmative action and reservation.

A way needs to be found to relate eligibility under the quota to the economic status of the aspirant's family but with provision

for special and preferential treatment for the SCs, the STs, and the OBCs. This should be combined with measures to increase their opportunity to access and pursue higher education.

A simple and straightforward way of taking economic status into account would be to limit eligibility to students from families that are not liable to income tax. By doing so the pressure for expanding the list of OBCs will be automatically dampened. All students from the categories eligible for reservation who perform above a well defined standard but cannot afford higher education deserve to be given the opportunity and special coaching facilities at public expense to compete in entrance tests for higher education, including professional education. And those who perform satisfactorily in the entrance tests should be enabled to join and complete the courses by giving them financial assistance from public funds to meet the costs.

It is important to recognise that a sizable number of students from other social categories who perform quite well in high school examinations cannot afford higher studies. Extending these facilities and assistance to students from the non-scheduled castes who perform well in school leaving and entrance exams would make the scheme more broad based and caste/community neutral.

The above approach offers a practical and transparent way of widening access to higher education for students, combining social and economic disadvantage, who perform well in schools. Working out the details of the scheme will of course have to address issues like (a) basis for fixing performance standards for eligibility; (b) whether they

should be uniform between scheduled and non-scheduled categories and within the former; (c) whether specific admission quotas should be fixed for scheduled categories collectively or individually. But these are not insuperable problems. What is important is to ensure clear and transparent criteria along with credible monitoring mechanisms to see that they are observed.

The basic problem

This does not, of course, address the more basic problem of inadequate and poor quality of teaching and facilities and equipment of the public school system on which most children of socially and economically disadvantaged groups depend. A serious and sustained effort is essential to correct these deficiencies.

Of course this calls for larger allocations of public funds for public schools, perhaps combined with a review of public funding of private schools. But larger funding will not be of much avail unless the quality of teachers and teaching in public schools improves significantly. That calls for thorough reform of the way the public school system is organised and managed.

These reforms do not figure high on the state agenda. Nor are the new elite and the middle classes particularly interested in pressing for such reform. They are far more concerned in mobilising political pressure to abandon or at least dilute the reservation system so that their class can take advantage of the burgeoning opportunities at home and abroad.

(Professor A. Vaidyanathan is a development economist and a former member of the Planning Commission.)

1815

9 Oct 2006

18 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

THURSDAY, MAY 18, 2006

AD 10 Reconciling competing interests 18/5 ✓

The anti-reservation stir that has spread across a few cities would seem to have as its ingredients hype and knee-jerk opposition mixed with some elements of genuine concern. While it certainly does not look like turning into an anti-Mandal II phase, it has disrupted the working of hospitals and threatens to heighten social tensions across urban India. Already, agitations to counter the opposition to quotas in Central government educational institutions have been started in different parts of the country, including Delhi and Bangalore. After the traumatic Mandal phase, a balance has been struck, with all sections of political opinion remaining committed to reservations as a means of levelling the field for those who are socially and educationally disadvantaged. At the same time, a limit of 50 per cent has been set so that the principle of equal opportunity for all irrespective of caste or religion, and 'merit' in the sense of academic or entrance test performance are not overridden completely. The primary purpose of the Constitution (Ninety-third) Amendment was to extend reservations to private educational institutions after the Supreme Court struck down government quotas and reservations in private unaided institutions. The issue of reservations in Central government institutions was brought to the fore by a statement of Union Human Resources Minister Arjun Singh, particularly after the Election Commission over-reacted to it and raised the question of violation of the model code of conduct.

There are, of course, genuine concerns over the possible reduction in the number of seats open to all on the basis of academic performance. Such concerns can be taken care of by increasing the number of places available so that open competition opportunities are not diminished as a result of quotas. This indeed has been found to be a practical way of reconciling the interests of different sections in many States, notably Tamil Nadu, where reservations have been in vogue for several decades. While in the case of Central government institutions generally what is involved is the issue of social equity and striking a balance between the interests of different sections, the question of extending reservations to distinctive institutions such as IITs and IIMs raises a different set of issues altogether. Reservations by definition involve some sacrifice of academic 'merit' — testable in open, unmediated competition — at the altar of social justice; and in the larger interests of society it may be necessary to keep some institutions outside the purview of reservations, and committed uncompromisingly to open competition and the pursuit of academic excellence. The IITs and the IIMs, through their intensely competitive and rigorous admission processes that bring in the very best students and by their commitment to education of the highest quality, have gained an enviable reputation internationally. Public policy should ensure that they remain islands of excellence, uninfluenced by any other consideration. Even under a regime of reservations, there are certain areas where professional capability and performance alone count to the exclusion of all else — airline pilots, higher specialties in surgery and medicine, and the higher ranks of the armed forces, for instance. At the same time, improving access to these institutions through positive action should be made a priority. As for the rest, given the total political consensus at the national level in favour of reservations, no agitation by a small section of society, however worked up over the issue, is going to make any difference.

18 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

তিন কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রীকে সমাধানসূত্র খোঁজার ভার

অর্থনৈতিক ভিত্তিও থাকুক সংরক্ষণে, চাইছে সিপিএম

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৭ মে: শুধু জাতপাত নয়, সংরক্ষণের সংজ্ঞায় একটি আর্থিক মাত্রা যোগ করা একান্ত জরুরি বলে মনে করে সিপিএম। সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে বাম দলগুলি এ ক'দিন খানিকটা চুপচাপ থাকার পরে আজ পলিটব্যুরো এই ভাবেই তাদের অবস্থান স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছে।

গত কাল কলকাতায় সিপিএমের ছাত্র সংগঠন এসএফআই সংরক্ষণের প্রঙ্গে তাদের নীতিগত সমর্থন জানিয়েছিল। আজ পলিটব্যুরোর তরফে বিবৃতিতে বলা হল, অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির মধ্যে যাঁরা স্বচ্ছল, তাঁদের সংরক্ষণের সুবিধা দেওয়ার কোনও মানে হয় না। বরং গরিব উচ্চবর্ণের ছাত্রদের জন্য সংরক্ষণের ব্যাপারটি বিবেচনা করা যেতে পারে। সিপিএম পরিষ্কার বলেছে, তারা নীতিগত ভাবে সংরক্ষণের পক্ষে। তবে তাদের মতে, এটা মনে রাখা উচিত যে, প্রাথমিক ভূমি-সংস্কার এবং আর্থ-সামাজিক ব্যবস্থার পরিবর্তন ছাড়া শুধু সংরক্ষণ করে জাতপাতের সমস্যার সমাধান হবে না। উচ্চশিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলিতে আসন সংখ্যা যেহেতু এমনিতেই কম, সংরক্ষিত আসন বাড়ানোর সঙ্গে সঙ্গে মোট আসনসংখ্যা বাড়ানোও দরকার। পলিটব্যুরোর তরফে বলা হয়েছে, এই বিষয়ে সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার আগে কেন্দ্রের উচিত বিষয়টি নিয়ে জাতীয় বিতর্কের সুযোগ করে দেওয়া। বেসরকারি শিক্ষাপ্রতিষ্ঠানগুলিকে নিয়ন্ত্রণের বিষয়টিও বিবৃতিতে রয়েছে।

ঘটনাচক্রে আজই পিছিয়ে পড়া সম্প্রদায়গুলির আর্থিক উন্নয়ন সংক্রান্ত সংসদীয় কমিটির পঞ্চদশ রিপোর্ট সংসদে পেশ করা হয়। এই রিপোর্টে ভারতে এই মুহূর্তে কতগুলি পিছিয়ে পড়া সম্প্রদায় রয়েছে, সামাজিক ন্যায় ও ক্ষমতায়ন মন্ত্রককে তা নতুন করে খতিয়ে দেখতে বলা হয়েছে। একই সঙ্গে কত জন মানুষ দারিদ্রসীমার নীচে বাস করছেন, তা-ও হিসেব করা দরকার বলে রিপোর্টে উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে।

এই পরিস্থিতিতে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার আজ জানিয়েছে সমাজের সব শ্রেণির স্বার্থ মাথায় রেখেই সংরক্ষণ-সমস্যার সমাধান খুঁজতে হবে। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়, মানবসম্পদ উন্নয়নমন্ত্রী অর্জুন সিংহ এবং অর্থমন্ত্রী পি চিদম্বরমকে নিয়ে একটি দল গঠন করা হচ্ছে।

তারা ই সংরক্ষণ বিতর্কের সমাধানসূত্র খুঁজে বার করবেন। চিদম্বরমের কথায়, “এটা কোনও আনুষ্ঠানিক কমিটি বা প্যানেল নয়। সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে সম্প্রতি যে সমস্যা দেখা দিয়েছে, তিন মন্ত্রী মিলে তা থেকে বেরিয়ে আসার উপায় খুঁজে বার করা হবে।” তবে এ নিয়ে মন্ত্রীদের কোনও নির্দিষ্ট সময়সীমা বেঁধে দেওয়া হয়নি।

আজ লোকসভায় সংরক্ষণের বিষয়টি নিয়ে দৃষ্টি-আকর্ষণী প্রস্তাব আনেন বিজেপি নেতা বিজয় কুমার মলহোত্রা। তিনি প্রথমেই বলে নেন, সংরক্ষণের প্রয়োজনীয়তা নিয়ে সব দলই একমত। কিন্তু বিক্ষুব্ধ ছাত্র ও ডাক্তারদের উপরে পুলিশি ‘অত্যাচার’-এর নিন্দা করে মলহোত্রা বলেন, “প্রধানমন্ত্রী এবং কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রী কেন চুপ করে আছেন, বুঝতে পারছি না।” সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই সংরক্ষণ-পন্থী সাংসদদের একাংশ হইচই শুরু করে দেন। এনডিএ নেতারা পাল্টা জবাব দিতে শুরু করলে পিঁকার সবাইকে ভৎসনা করে বলেন, “সারা দেশ আপনাদের আচরণ দেখছে। দয়া করে সংযত হোন।” বিভিন্ন সাংসদের বক্তব্য শোনার পর মানবসম্পদ উন্নয়নমন্ত্রী জানান, সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে সংসদে ইতিমধ্যেই সিদ্ধান্ত হয়ে গিয়েছে। সেই সিদ্ধান্ত থেকে সরকার পিছিয়ে আসবে না। একই সঙ্গে তিনি বলেন, “যারা প্রতিবাদ করছে, তারা আমাদেরই ছেলেমেয়ে। তাদের কথাও ভাবতে হবে। মন্ত্রিসভার সামনে আসনসংখ্যা বাড়ানো বা উচ্চবর্ণের গরিবদের জন্য সংরক্ষণের মতো বেশ কিছু প্রস্তাব রয়েছে। যাতে সবার স্বার্থরক্ষা হয়, তেমন সিদ্ধান্তই নেওয়া হবে।” তবে “২৪ ঘণ্টার মধ্যে এর সমাধান বার করা সম্ভব নয়।”

অর্জুনের বক্তব্য থেকে পরিষ্কার, সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে মোটামুটি ভাবে একটা সমাধানের পরিকল্পনা সরকারের রয়েছে। ছাত্র-ডাক্তারদের সঙ্গে দেখা করে আজ কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী অক্ষর ফার্নান্দেজও সর্বজনগ্রাহ্য সমাধানের আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন। কেন্দ্রের অবস্থান স্পষ্ট হয়ে যাওয়ার পর বিভিন্ন দল প্রকাশ্যে মুখ খুলতে শুরু করেছে। তবে সংসদের বর্ষাকালীন অধিবেশন শুরু হওয়ার আগেই আগামী শিক্ষাবর্ষ শুরু হয়ে যাবে। সে কথা মাথায় রেখে আজ সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে চলতি অধিবেশনেই একটি অর্ডিন্যান্স পাশ করার দাবি তুলেছে সিপিএম।

কর্মবিরতির জেরে পরিষেবা বেহাল এ বার কলকাতাতেও

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, কলকাতা ও নয়াদিল্লি: মঙ্গলবার কলকাতায় রাস্তা অবরোধে নাভিস্থাস উঠেছিল পথচলতি মানুষের। আর বুধবার হাসপাতালে কর্মবিরতির জেরেও মাকাল হলেন সেই সাধারণ মানুষই। শিক্ষাক্ষেত্রে সংরক্ষণের প্রতিবাদে আরও এক বার বলি হলেন আমজনতাই। এ দিন কলকাতা, বর্ধমান ও উত্তরবঙ্গ মেডিক্যাল কলেজে জুনিয়র ডাক্তাররা কর্মবিরতি পালন করেন। এখানেই শেষ নয়, আজ, বৃহস্পতিবার নাশনাল মেডিক্যাল কলেজ এবং এসএসকেএমের জুনিয়র ডাক্তাররাও কাজ বন্ধ রাখবেন।

রাজধানীতে অবশ্য পাঁচটি সরকারি হাসপাতালে আন্দোলন কিছুটা বিলম্বিত মুখে। ডাক্তারদের একাংশ কাজে যোগ দিয়েছেন, একাংশ দেননি। এ দিন কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী অক্ষর ফার্নান্দেজ ধর্মঘটী ডাক্তার-ছাত্রছাত্রীদের সঙ্গে দেখা করলে তাঁরা বিচারবিভাগীয় কমিশন গঠন করে সংরক্ষণনীতি খতিয়ে দেখার দাবি জানান। প্রায় এক ঘণ্টা কথা বলেন ফার্নান্দেজ। তিনি জানান, প্রধানমন্ত্রী তাঁকে পাঠাননি। তিনি নিজেই কথা বলতে এসেছেন। ২৭ শতাংশ সংরক্ষণ বৃদ্ধির প্রস্তাব সম্পূর্ণ বাতিল করার দাবি নিয়ে মন্ত্রীকে তিন দফা হলফনামা পেশ করা হয়।

এই আন্দোলনের ব্যাপারে কিছুটা নরমেগরমেই চলছে কেন্দ্র। কাল কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার ধর্মঘটী ডাক্তারদের প্রতি নোটিস জারি করে বলে, কাজে না ফিরলে চাকরি থেকে বরখাস্ত হতে হবে। তার পরই জুনিয়র এবং আবাসিক ডাক্তারদের একাংশ জানান, তাঁরা কাজে ফিরতে চান। কিন্তু তখনও জুনিয়র ডাক্তারদের একাংশ এই সিদ্ধান্তের বিরোধিতা করেন। আজ এইমস সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, কিছু ডাক্তার কাজে যোগ দিয়েছেন। রামমনোহর লোহিয়া হাসপাতালে ৩০১ জন আবাসিক ডাক্তারের মধ্যে ৮১ জন কাজে ফিরেছেন। সফদর জঙ্গ হাসপাতালে অবশ্য ধর্মঘটীরা কাজে ফেরেননি। এইমসের আবাসিক ডাক্তারদের সংগঠনের সদস্য ড. সূত্রত মণ্ডলের দাবি, “শুধু এইমস কেন, পাঁচটি হাসপাতালের কোথাও ডাক্তারেরা কাজে ফেরেননি।” তবে দাবি, পাল্টা দাবি যাই-ই হোক,

চিকিৎসা পরিষেবার সামগ্রিক হালে লক্ষণীয় উন্নতি কিছু হয়নি।

কলকাতায় এ দিন জুনিয়র ডাক্তারদের কর্মবিরতির জেরে মেডিক্যাল কলেজেব স্বাভাবিক কাজকর্ম ব্যাহত হয়। দূর-দূরান্ত থেকে বহির্বিভাগে দেখাতে আসা বহু রোগীকে হয়রান হতে হয়েছে। হাবড়া থেকে মেডিসিন বিভাগে এসেছিলেন বছর পঞ্চাশের অশোক হালদার। সকাল আটটা থেকে বেলা সাড়ে বারোটা পর্যন্ত তিনি রোগীদের লাইনে দাঁড়িয়েছিলেন। ক্রান্ত অশোকবাবু কিছুটা স্কোভের সুরেই বললেন, “আন্দোলনে আপত্তি নেই। কিন্তু রোগীদের হেনস্থা করে আন্দোলন করলে ডাক্তারবাবুদের মানবিকতা নিয়েই তো প্রশ্ন উঠবে।” একই রকম প্রতিক্রিয়া হাওড়ার রানিহাটি থেকে স্ত্রীরোগ বিভাগে দেখাতে আসা রাবিয়া খাতুনেরও। জুনিয়র ডাক্তারদের তরফে সপ্তর্ষি ভট্টাচার্য ও স্বীকার করেন, বয়কটের ফলে বহির্বিভাগে কাজের গতি অত্যন্ত মন্থর। এ জন্য তাঁরা রোগীদের কাছে দুঃখ প্রকাশও করেন। তবে কাজকর্ম যে একেবারে বন্ধ হয়ে যায়নি তাতেই খুশি কলেজের অধ্যক্ষ ইন্ড্রজিৎ রায়। এদিনও কলকাতা মেডিক্যাল কলেজের প্রশাসনিক ভবনের সামনে আন্দোলনরত জুনিয়র ডাক্তার ও ছাত্রছাত্রীরা অবস্থান-বিক্ষোভ জারি রাখেন। তাঁদের সঙ্গে কলকাতার অন্যান্য মেডিক্যাল কলেজের জুনিয়র ডাক্তার এবং ছাত্রছাত্রীদের একাংশও যোগ দেন।

বর্ধমান মেডিক্যাল কলেজে এদিনও জুনিয়র ডাক্তাররা কাজে যোগ না দেওয়ায় পরিষেবা বেহাল হয়ে পড়ে। বাঁকুড়া মেডিক্যাল কলেজে সকাল সাড়ে ১০টা থেকে বহির্বিভাগের মূল ফটক আটকে বিক্ষোভ শুরু হয়। ঘটনাক্রমে পরে অন্য দিকের একটি দরজা খুলে বহির্বিভাগ চালু করা হয়। উত্তরবঙ্গ মেডিক্যাল কলেজের পড়ুয়া ও জুনিয়র ডাক্তাররা সকাল সাড়ে ১০টা থেকে ৩১ নম্বর জাতীয় সড়ক অবরোধ করেন। অবরোধ চলে আড়াই ঘণ্টা। এই পুরো সময়টা উত্তরবঙ্গের সঙ্গে অন্যান্য অংশের যোগাযোগ বন্ধ হয়ে যায়। বেলা ১টা নাগাদ পুলিশের উচ্চপদস্থ কর্মীদের অনুরোধে ডাক্তাররা অবরোধ তুলে নেন।

Centre considering increase in seats to break quota deadlock

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Entrusted with the task of finding a solution to the reservation tangle, the Central Group of Ministers headed by Pranab Mukherjee met here on Thursday to work out a mechanism. The GoM invited two senior Ministers, Sharad Pawar and Anbumani Ramdoss, for discussion.

Having affirmed that there was no going back on implementation of reservations for Other Backward Classes in higher educational institutions, the GoM, according to sources, was looking at the possibility of raising the number of seats and improving infrastructure to support the increased intake.

The GoM would continue consultations with various sections of society and political parties to work out a formula. Besides Mr. Mukherjee, the GoM includes Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh and Finance Minister P. Chidambaram.

the OBCs to get the maximum benefit, it did not want the general category students to lose out on account of the reservation decision.

"A formula is being worked out. Different political parties' views will be taken and the Prime Minister will start consultations from Monday," Mr. Shukla said.

Working Committee meeting

The party has called a meeting of its Working Committee here on Saturday to discuss the issue.

A delegation of Communist Party of India including its national secretary D. Raja and party MPs Gurudas Dasgupta, S. Sudhakar Reddy and C.K. Channappan met the Prime Minister on the issue. Mr. Raja said the Prime Minister had said the Government was fully committed to implementing the decision and was trying to find out a way to address the concerns of other sections.



SOME HEADWAY: Representatives of striking medical students and doctors in Delhi on Thursday soon after their talks with Union Minister Pranab Mukherjee on the reservation issue. - PHOTO: SANDEEP SAXENA

Mr. Mukherjee also met representatives of the medical students and asked them to return to the work. They were told that the Government was working

out a formula to address their concerns. The Congress too echoed similar views. Party spokesperson Rajiv Shukla said while it wanted

19 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

মারমুখী সংরক্ষণপন্থী ছাত্রদের উপরে লাঠি অস্বস্তিতে নীতীশ

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, পটনা ১৯ মে: সংরক্ষণপন্থী ডাক্তারির ছাত্রেরা আজ পটনার রাজপথে মারমুখী হয়ে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী নীতীশ কুমারকে ঘোর অস্বস্তিতে ফেলে দিলেন। কারণ, পরিস্থিতি সামাল দিতে ছাত্রদেরও পাল্টা বেধড়ক লাঠিচার্জ করেছে পুলিশ। আর দেশ জুড়ে সেই ছবি সম্প্রচারিত হয়েছে চ্যানেলে চ্যানেলে। আপাতত নীতীশ দ্রুত এই ঘটনার তদন্তের ভার পুলিশের এক উচ্চপদস্থ কর্তার হাতে তুলে দিয়েছেন। সংরক্ষণের পক্ষে জোরালো সওয়ালকারী লালুপ্রসাদ যাতে এই সুযোগে ময়দানে না নামতে পারেন, তার জন্যই তড়িঘড়ি তদন্তের ব্যবস্থা।

সংরক্ষণপন্থীরা প্রথম দিন পথে নেমেই বামেলায় জড়িয়ে পড়লেন পুলিশ ও সংবাদমাধ্যমের সঙ্গে। সংরক্ষণের প্রক্ষেপে সংবাদমাধ্যম বিরোধী অবস্থান নিয়েছে, এই অভিযোগে ফুরু ছাত্রেরা সংবাদপত্রের দফতরের ভাঙচুর চালান। বেশ কয়েকটি গাড়িও ভাঙেন। ছাত্রদের সঙ্গে সংঘর্ষে এক কনস্টেবল ও বৈদ্যুতিন মাধ্যমের এক কর্মী গুরুতরভাবে আহত হন। যদিও ছাত্র সংগঠনের পক্ষ থেকে জানানো হয়েছে, ছাত্রেরা নয়, বাইরে থেকে আগত কিছু দুকৃতীদের প্ররোচনায় এই কাণ্ড ঘটেছে। বহু ছাত্র লাঠিতে আহত হয়েছেন।

পটনা মেডিক্যাল কলেজ হাসপাতালে অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির ছাত্রদের দাবি, সংরক্ষণের প্রস্তাব অবিলম্বে কার্যকর করতে হবে। এই দাবিতে তাঁদের বের করা মিছিল পুলিশ গাঁধী ময়দানের কাছে আটকে দেয়। পরে পুলিশকে ছাত্রেরা আশ্বাস দেন, তাঁরা শহরের ডাকবাংলো মোড়ে শান্তিপূর্ণ অবস্থান-সমাবেশ করে চলে যাবেন। কিন্তু গাঁধী ময়দান থেকে মিছিল ফ্রেজার রোড ধরে যাওয়ার সময় আচমকা একদল ছাত্র এলাকার একটি ইংরেজি সংবাদমাধ্যমের দফতরে হামলা চালায়। কিছু গাড়ির কাচও ভেঙে ফেলা হয়। দৈনিকের কর্মীরা পাল্টা আক্রমণ করলে

পুলিশ এসে পরিস্থিতি সামাল দেয়।

মিছিল ডাকবাংলো মোড়ে পৌঁছলে সংবাদমাধ্যমের প্রতিনিধিদের সঙ্গে প্রথমে বাদানুবাদ। পরে হাতাহাতিতে জড়িয়ে পড়েন ছাত্রেরা। পুলিশ প্রথমে দর্শকের ভূমিকা নেয়। পরে এক কনস্টেবল ছাত্রদের ছোড়া ইটের ঘায়ে গুরুতর আহত হলে পুলিশ ছাত্রদের উপরে বেদম লাঠি চালায়। মহিলা ডাক্তারদেরও মারে পুলিশ। অনগ্রসর ছাত্র সংগঠন আরক্ষণ সমর্থক মোচার প্রদেশ সভাপতি ভূমিলাল বলেন, “শান্তিপূর্ণ ওই মিছিলে সমাজবিরোধীরা ঢুকে গণ্ডগোল করে। পুলিশ ছাত্রদের অমানুষের মতো পিটিয়েছে। ছাত্রেরা কাল কালা দিবস পালন করবেন।”

অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির ছাত্রদের উপরে পুলিশি হামলায় সমস্যায় পড়েছেন নীতীশ সরকার। বর্তমান এনডিএ সরকারের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী হলেও কৃষি সম্প্রদায়ভুক্ত নীতীশ কুমার নিজে উদ্যোগী হয়ে এ বছর পঞ্চায়তে নির্বাচনে দলিতদের জন্য ২০ শতাংশ সংরক্ষণের ব্যবস্থা করেছেন। সুতরাং অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির লোকেরা স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই তাঁর কাছে কিছু বাড়তি প্রত্যাশা করে থাকে। পাশাপাশি সংরক্ষণের প্রক্ষেপে কোমর বেঁধে আসরে নেমেছেন লালুপ্রসাদ। তিনি ইতিমধ্যেই ঘোষণা করেছেন, যে কোনও মূল্যে সংরক্ষণ প্রস্তাবে তিনি কেন্দ্রের সম্মতি আদায় করেই ছাড়বেন। অন্য দিকে, সরকারের শরিক বিজেপি উচ্চশ্রেণির ভূস্বামীদের দল বলে পরিচিত। যারা স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই এই সংরক্ষণের বিরোধী। তাই সংরক্ষণের প্রক্ষেপে সরাসরি নিজের অবস্থান জানাতে চাইছেন না মুখ্যমন্ত্রী। তিনি সাংবাদিকদের শুধু বলেন, “কেন্দ্র এখনও সিদ্ধান্ত নেয়নি। তার আগেই এরকম হইচই পাকানোর কোনও মানে হয় না। তবে যে ঘটনা ঘটেছে তার তদন্তের ভার বিহার পুলিশের ডিজিপি কে দেওয়া হয়েছে। অভিযুক্তদের শাস্তি দেওয়া হবেই।”

Quota crisis continues to simmer

Medicos Tell Centre To Increase Seats First
14th 9.15.05
 Reservation Supporters Vent Ire On Media

New Delhi: Responding to the Centre's statement on Friday that a formula was being worked out to increase the number of seats as also institutions to ensure that the general category remained unaffected while implementing the OBC quota, protesting medicos demanded that the seats be increased before the quota hike was implemented.

"Some figures are being worked out. Increasing the number of seats in the existing institutions and also creating new institutions. The financial implications will be worked out," defence minister Pranab Mukherjee said after a meeting of the group of senior ministers formed to arrive at a comprehensive package to resolve the quota imbroglio. Besides Mukherjee, the meeting was attended by HRD minister Arjun Singh, finance minister P Chidambaram as well as health minister Anbumani Ramdoss, who was an invitee. Talking broadly about the likely formula, Mukherjee said to implement the OBC reservation, the seats in an institution having 100 seats would have to be raised to 154 in order to ensure that the general category seats remained intact. "The general category seats will contin-



A candle light protest by Ahmedabad medicos opposing quota on Friday

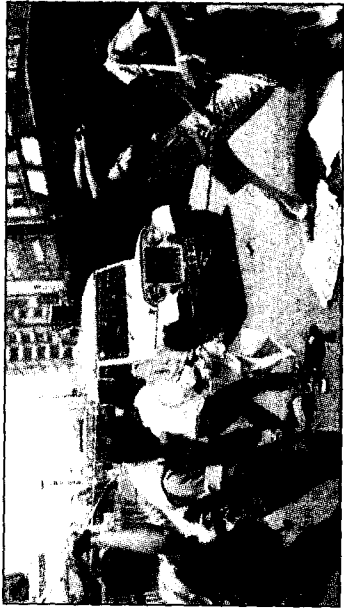
ue to remain the same," he said, adding that new institutions would also be established.

Meanwhile, supporting the striking medical students and representatives, members of the AIIMS Faculty Association held a day-long fast on Friday. "We are supporting the students and doctors and we want the government to listen to them," said Dr K K Handa of the faculty association. AGENCIES

Patna: Thirty-five people, four of them mediapersons and some policemen, were injured in a clash between the police and pro-quota agitators here on Friday. The clash turned so ugly that even members of the press were not spared, beaten with sticks and lathis by the students.

Shouting slogans against those opposing the Union human resource ministry's proposal to introduce reservations for OBCs, hundreds of pro-quota medical students and junior doctors took out a procession from Gandhi Maidan. On reaching the busy Dak Bungalow roundabout, they burnt effigies of anti-quota protesters. And without any provocation, they turned violent and attacked journalists and cameramen covering the agitation with sticks, lathis and other objects.

Photographers of the Press Trust of India, The



Police rain blows on pro-quota demonstrators in Patna on Friday

Times of India and Hindustan Times, cameramen of Star News and Aaj Tak TV channels and some journalists were injured in the attack. A couple of lensmen suffered head injuries and are being treated at Patna Medical College.

The pro-quota agitators also attacked policemen with sticks, forcing them to resort

GoM formula for increasing seats

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To submit report to Prime Minister today

K.V. Prasad

NEW DELHI: The Group of Ministers (GoM) on reservation said on Friday it had evolved a formula to find a solution to the contentious issue and it would submit a report to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Saturday.

Students all over the country have been staging protests on the issue.

Under the formula, the number of seats in institutions of higher learning could be expanded to take care of quota, without disturbing the general category seats.

This move would require the Government to create infrastructure, including teaching faculty, and entail additional expenditure.

Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee, who heads the GoM, told presspersons after a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security that they were working out some figures.

For instance, an institution that has 100 seats would have to increase its seats to 154. This would help in extending reservation to other backward classes, without disturbing the general category. Those general category seats which are there today will continue to be the same," Mr. Mukherjee said.

Besides Mr. Mukherjee, other GoM members Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh and Finance Minister P. Chidambaram were present. Union Health Minister Anbumani Ramadoss was invited.

Asked whether he would meet the agitating students, Mr. Mukherjee said if they want to meet

him, he would have no problem in doing so.

The Minister on Thursday met with representatives of the students.

Political discussions

Mr. Mukherjee said the Prime Minister would also have discussions with various political groups on the issue.

The Congress on Thursday announced that Dr. Singh would begin the process from Monday.

Medicos clash with police

K. Balchand reports from Patna:

More than a dozen journalists and police personnel were injured when medicos, supporting the demand for more quotas for the Other Backward Classes in higher education institutions, went on the rampage here on Friday. In police retaliation, about two dozen medicos were injured.

Poor coverage

The demonstrators carried placards protesting the delay in increasing the quota and the allegedly poor coverage of their cause by the print and electronic media. They smashed cars parked in front of a newspaper office. Some of them, wielding lathis, assaulted mediapersons. This led to scuffles. About 10 journalists, including cameramen, and half a dozen police personnel suffered injuries.

• General category seats will not be disturbed

• Pranab ready to meet agitating students

• Patna Medical College shut down

The police swung into action when one of their colleagues fell unconscious after he was beaten up. They resorted to a lathi-charge in which several medicos, including women, were injured.

The medicos shut down the Patna Medical College Hospital and invited NDTV Special Correspondent Manish to cover their agitation. When he arrived, they threw stones at him. He suffered head injuries.

Nitish condemns

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar condemned the attack on journalists and police personnel and said such criminal acts would not be tolerated.

He directed Director-General of Police Ashish Ranjan Sinha to conduct an investigation into the attack.

He said there was no justification for any agitation as the Centre was yet to come out with a concrete proposal on the quota issue.

He was confident that a consensus would be reached.

Mr. Kumar suggested an increase in the number of seats in educational institutions. He hoped that engineering and medical students would not allow anti-social elements to take advantage of the situation and mislead them.

Photograph on Page 14

20 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

DELHI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS BACK QUOTA PROTESTERS

Medicos want more seats

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Curtis & Ben
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SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, May 19: Continuing their anti-reservation protests, striking medicos today demanded that the number of seats in higher educational institutions be increased before implementing the proposed OBC quota hike.

Joining the medicos in their protests, representatives of the AIIMS Faculty Association began a day-long fast without striking work.

Agitating medicos today received a shot in the arm with Delhi University students joining the anti-reservation protests by taking out a march on the varsity's north campus demanding immediate roll back of the proposed OBC quotas in educational institutions.

Hundreds of students shouting anti-reservation slogans led by inspirational writer Mr Shiv Khera took out a protest march from the arts faculty to the vice-chancellor's residence.

The DU students are also joining the medicos on hunger-strike at AIIMS tomorrow.

Not the solution: Murthy

BANGALORE, May 19: Infosys chairman Mr NR Narayana Murthy today said that increasing the number of seats in central elite institutions was not the solution to the reservation issue.

"Before talking about increasing the seats, the government should talk to the directors of the institutes and find out if they have enough resources," Mr Murthy, who is also chairman of the governing body of IIM, Ahmedabad, told reporters. "We should concentrate more on primary education and provide students with more nutrition, books and other facilities," he said.

In Ahmedabad, IIM-A director Mr Bakul Dholakia said: "We are in the process of increasing the number of seats, from 180 in 2002 to 400 by 2007. At this juncture our plate is totally full". ■ SNS

GoM report

The group of three senior Cabinet ministers will submit its report to the Prime Minister tomorrow, with the defence minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, clearly indicating that the formula to defuse the quota crisis would be centred around the plan to increase the number of seats for general category students in Central institutions to cushion them from the proposed 27 per cent reservation for OBCs there.

Mr Mukherjee, who



heads the group of ministers (GoM), said he along with the finance minister, Mr P Chidambaram, reported to the PM about the "progress on its work" during the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security this evening. "I will see the papers (report) and send them by tomorrow morning (to the PM)", said Mr Mukherjee.

Earlier today, the GoM held its meeting, the second one since yesterday, on the quota issue. Following the meeting, Mr Mukherjee

unveiled a preliminary government formula that could be hammered out and fine-tuned in coming days. "Increase the number of seats in the existing institutions and also create new institutions. Financial implications will be worked out."

Mr Mukherjee said that to implement the OBC reservation, the seats in an institution with 100 seats would have to be raised to 154 in order to ensure that the existing general category seats remain intact.

Patna lathi-charge

Thirty-five people, including four mediamen and some policemen, were injured in a clash in Patna today between police and pro-quota agitators who also targeted members of the press with sticks.

Police resorted to a lathi-charge to disperse the demonstrators. Shouting slogans against those opposing reservation for OBCs, hundreds of pro-quota medical students and junior doctors took out a procession from the Gandhi Maidan.

20 MAY 2006

THE STATESMAN

GOM gives report to Manmohan

Health Ministry warns that action would be taken against medicos

NEW DELHI: As the impasse continued on the issue of reservations, the Group of Ministers created to deal with the issue forwarded its report to the Prime Minister on Saturday, favouring implementation of the quota for the Other Backward Communities (OBC) as soon as possible and recommending an increase in seats in elite educational institutions.

Toughening its stand, the Health Ministry warned that stringent action would be taken against medicos who continued

to abstain from work to oppose the proposed 27 per cent reservations for the OBCs.

Advertisements appeared in the press for recruitment of doctors in Central Government-run hospitals. Officials said walk-in interviews would begin on Monday.

"The Group of Ministers held a meeting on Saturday and forwarded its report to the Prime Minister's Office," a source said.

The report favoured implementation of the quota for the OBCs as soon as possible.

However, it also recommended increasing the number of seats in educational institutes in a phased manner so that general category seats are not reduced.

The government said the setting up of new AIIMS-like institutions across the country would result in more seats for the general category, sources said.

"The Group of Ministers has worked out a formula to increase the number of seats as well as institutions to ensure that the general category remained un-

affected while implementing the quota," a source said.

Pranab meets doctors

In a bid to resolve the crisis, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee on Saturday met representatives of the striking junior doctors. Sources said that a solution to the situation was "closer" with both sides softening their stand.

The government has indicated it would go for phased implementation of the quota for OBCs and also increase the number of seats in educational

institutions, they said. The protesters modified their demand for a "non-political" committee to study the quota issue.

"A judicial committee was our demand. But now we are demanding the constitution of an expert committee comprising members from non-political organisations to review the existing reservation policy and find out whether reservation for OBCs is required at all," said Vinod Patra, president of the Resident Doctors Association of AIIMS. — PTI

More protesters join anti-reservation rally in Delhi

Engineers, traders, accountants join in, medicos from other States arrive to show solidarity ^{21/5}

Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI: Hundreds of students, professionals and members of social groups from across the country came together to protest against reservation in higher education and hit the streets of the capital on Saturday.

It was the biggest protest seen here since the medical students announced their hunger strike a week ago. Joining in the peaceful march were not just students from Jaipur, Baroda, Ahmedabad, Kanpur and Guwahati, but also chartered accountants, software engineers, resident welfare associations and traders' organisations.

While medical students protesting under the banner of Youth For Equality marched from Maulana Azad Medical College (MAMC) to Parliament Street, they were joined at Jantar Mantar by those supporting the United Students Group. A signature campaign was also launched to gather support.

Noting that the march was an attempt to prove that students can get the Government's attention through peaceful means, the groups reiterated the need to keep the agitation peaceful.

During the protest, which lasted over three hours, a two-minute silence was observed at Parliament Street to express opposition to the reservation policy.

While students kept the tempo high with their slogans and songs, lending support with his witty one liners and speech was cricketer-turned-politician and



DEMONSTRATION: Doctors and medicos staging a protest rally in New Delhi on Saturday to protest against the Government's proposed reservation for OBCs. — PHOTO: SHANKER CHAKRAVARTY

Bharatiya Janata Party MP Navjot Singh Sidhu who addressed the students here.

Criticising the Government's attempt to turn a blind eye to the protests, the former cricketer said caste politics was being used

to divide the community.

"In the last 50 years, the rich have become richer and the poor poorer in this country. Why does the Government not focus on giving free quality education to students so they are qualified

enough to compete with the general category? People who are from the reserved category do not even know about the quota in many cases. Give them the education and through it an equal footing, but do not com-

promise on merit," he said. With students coming to the capital to express their support for the ongoing agitation, it was also a show of strength. "We were on strike in our institute. But we came all the way because

we feel very strongly about the issue and wanted to show our support to those on hunger strike here. All of us are in this together," said Tarun Deep Singh, a student of NHL Medical College, Ahmedabad.

Ministers' Team Has Nothing New To Offer

Panel's solution: More quota, & seats

cases & points

New Delhi: The three-member ministers' panel formed by the Prime Minister to resolve the reservations imbroglio submitted its report to PM Manmohan Singh on Saturday. It has recommended the implementation of quota for OBCs as soon as possible and also an increase in seats in elite educational institutions.

"The group of ministers held a meeting on Saturday and forwarded its report to the PMO," a source said. The report favoured implementation of the quota for the OBCs as soon as possible.

However, it also recommended increasing the number of seats in educational institutes in a phased manner so that general category seats are not reduced. The government said the setting up of new AIIMS-like institutions across the country would result in more seats for the general category.

PM Manmohan Singh on Saturday declared his govern-

ment's commitment to ensure rapid improvement in the social and educational status of the backward classes and minorities. Without referring to the controversy over reservations, he said his government was committed to the welfare of Dalits and tribals and all weaker sections of minorities.



IN THE EYE OF A STORM: Arjun Singh

"Our govt has given all our minorities a new sense of confidence. We will ensure rapid improvement in the social and educational status of the backward classes and minorities. This is our solemn commitment," he said.

Meanwhile, toughening its stand, the health ministry on Saturday warned that stringent action would be taken against medicos who continue to abstain from work over the proposed 27% reservations for OBCs. Advertisements were put out in newspapers for doctors in central government-run hospitals. Officials said the walk-in interviews would begin on Monday. AGENCIES

Now, students let their silence speak

New Delhi: Intensifying their month-old stir, thousands of students and doctors from across the country, joined by their parents and teachers, took out a massive silent march here on Saturday demanding rollback of the government's quota proposals for central educational institutes.

Amid tight security, medics from across the country, along with students from IITs, Delhi University and Jawaharlal Nehru University, members of the Resident Welfare Association rallied from Maulana Azad Medical College in central Delhi to Jantar Mantar. Waving placards and banners, the students, under the aegis of 'Youth For Equality', were joined by cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Sidhu, the BJP MP from Amritsar, and inspirational writer Shiv Khera in criticising the Centre's quota policy. Medical students from Varanasi, Mangalore, Bikaner, Jaipur, Rohtak, Patiala and Ajmer also joined the rally along with engineers from 54 private companies, including some major software firms.

"We want a peaceful rally and avoid any confrontation with the police and pro-reservation activists. Let us not shout slogans. Let our silence speak for itself," Dr Kumar Harsh, a representative of 'Youth For Equality' said.

Addressing the gathering at Jantar Mantar, Sidhu struck an immediate chord with the students with his one-liners. He said, "The Mandal commission recommendations, introduced in 1989, neither translated into votes for politicians nor benefited the backward class sections." Students on Friday said they would be okay with reservations if the general category seats were increased. AGENCIES

27 MAY 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Meeting the challenge of Mandal II

Is there a way forward where both merit and social justice can be given their due?

This two-part series attempts to find one.

Satish Deshpande & Yogendra Yadav

THE CENTRAL Government's move to introduce reservations for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in elite institutions of higher and professional education — popularly known as Mandal II — seems to be heading towards a stalemate. In this article, we propose a possible solution that might take us beyond the debilitating standoff between 'merit' and 'social justice'.

This is clearly an ambitious and optimistic agenda, especially because Mandal II proves that some mistakes are destined to be repeated. Once again the Government appears set to do the right thing in the wrong way, without the prior preparation, careful study, and opinion priming that such an important move obviously demands. It is even more shocking that students from our very best institutions are willing to re-enact the horribly inappropriate forms of protest from the original anti-Mandal agitation of 1990-91. As symbolic acts, street-sweeping or shoe-shining send the callous and arrogant message that some people — castes? — are indeed fit only for menial jobs, while others are 'naturally' suited to respectable professions such as engineering and medicine. However, the media do seem to have learnt something from their dishonourable role in Mandal I. By and large, both the print and electronic media have not been incendiary in their coverage, and some have even presented alternative views. Nevertheless, far too much remains unchanged across 16 years.

Perhaps the most crucial constant is the absence of a favourable climate of opinion. Outside the robust contestations of politics proper, our public life continues to be disproportionately dominated by the upper castes. It is therefore unsurprising, but still a matter of concern, that the dominant view denies the very validity of affirmative action. Indeed the antipathy towards reservations may have grown in recent years. The main problem is that the dominant view sees quotas and the like as benefits being handed out to particular caste groups. This leads logically to the conclusion that power-hungry politicians and vote bank politics are the root causes of this problem. But to think thus is to put the cart before the horse.

A rational and dispassionate analysis of this issue must begin with the one crucial fact that is undisputed by either side — the overwhelming dominance of upper castes in higher and especially professional education. Although undisputed, this fact is not easy to establish, especially in the case of our elite institutions, which have always been adamant about refusing to reveal information on the caste composition of their students and faculty. But the more general information that is available through the National Sample Survey Organisation clearly shows the caste-patterning of educational inequality. Some of the relevant data are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 shows the percentage of graduates in the population aged 20 years or above in

Table 1

Group inequalities in higher education:		
STs, SCs, Muslims, and OBCs lag behind. Sikhs, Christians, Upper Caste Hindus & Others far ahead		
Table shows percentage of graduates in population aged 20 years and above.		
Castes/Communities	Rural India	Urban India
ST	1.1	10.9
SC	1.2	4.7
Muslim	1.3	6.1
Hindu-OBC	2.1	8.6

Sikh	2.8	25.0
Christian	4.7	23.7
Hindu-Upper Caste	5.3	25.3
Other Religions	5.4	31.5
ALL INDIA AVERAGE	2.6	15.5
<i>Source: Computed from NSSO 55th Round Survey, 1999-2000</i>		

different castes and communities in rural and urban India. Only a little more than 1 per cent of Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, and Muslims are graduates in rural India, while the figure for Hindu upper castes is four to five times higher at over 5 per cent. The real inequalities are in urban India, where the SCs in particular, but also Muslims, OBCs, and STs are way behind the forward communities and castes with a quarter or more of their population being graduates. Another way of looking at it is that STs, SCs, Muslims, and OBCs are always below the national average while the other communities and especially Hindu upper castes are well above this average in both rural and urban India.

Table 2 shows the share of different castes and communities in the national pool of graduates as compared to their share of the total population aged 20 years or more. In other words, the table tells us which groups have a higher than proportionate (or lower than proportionate) share of graduates. Once again, with the exception of rural Hindu OBCs and urban STs, the same groups are severely under-represented while the Hindu upper castes, Other Religions (Jains, Parsis, Buddhists, etc.), and Christians are significantly over-represented among graduates. Thus the Hindu upper castes' share of graduates is twice their share in the population aged 20 or above in rural India, and one-and-a-half times their share in the population aged 20 or above in urban India. Compare this, for example, to urban SCs and Muslims, whose share of graduates is only 30 per cent and 39 per cent respectively of their share in the 20 and above population.

Table 2

Over- and Under-Represented Groups:		
STs, SCs, Muslims & urban OBCs severely under-represented. Sikhs, Christians, Hindu Upper Castes & Others over-represented		
Table shows group share of all graduates as a percentage of group share of 20+ population. Numbers below 100 indicate under-representation, above 100 indicate over-representation.		
Caste and Community Groups	Rural India	Urban India
ST	43	71
SC	47	30
Muslim	52	39
Hindu-OBC	82	56

Sikh	107	164
Christian	200	154
Hindu-UC	205	164
Other Religions	200	200
<i>Source: Computed from NSSO 55th Round Survey, 1999-2000</i>		

It should be emphasised that these data refer to all graduates from all kinds of institutions countrywide — if we were to look at the elite professional institutions, the relative dominance of the upper castes and forward communities is likely to be much stronger, although such institutions refuse to publish the data that could prove or disprove such claims.

Although it is implicitly conceded by both sides, upper caste dominance is explained in opposite ways. The upper castes claim that their preponderance is due solely to their superior merit, and that there is nothing to be done about this situation since merit should indeed be the sole criterion in determining access to higher education. In fact, they may go further to assert that any attempt to change the status quo can only result in "the murder of merit." Those who are for affirmative action argue that the traditional route to caste dominance — namely, an upper caste monopoly over higher education — still remains effective despite the apparent abolition of caste. From this perspective, the status quo is an unjust one requiring state intervention on behalf of disadvantaged sections who are unable to force entry under the current rules of the game. More extreme views of this kind may go on to assert that merit is merely an upper caste conjuring trick designed to keep out the lower castes.

What is wrong with this picture? Nothing, except that it is only part of a much larger frame. For if we understand merit as sheer innate ability, it is difficult to explain why it should seem to be an upper caste monopoly. Whatever people may believe privately, it is

now beyond doubt that arguments for the genetic or natural inferiority of social groups are unacceptable. If so, how is it that, roughly speaking, one quarter of our population supplies three quarters of our elite professionals? The explanation has to lie in the social mechanisms through which innate ability is translated into certifiable skill and encashable competence. This points to intended or unintended systemic exclusions in the educational system, and to inequalities in the background resources that education presupposes.

It is their confidence in having monopolised the educational system and its prerequisites that sustains the upper caste demand to consider only merit and not caste. If educational opportunities were truly equalised, the upper castes' share in professional education would be roughly in proportion to their population share, that is, between one fourth and one third. This would not only be roughly one third of their present strength in higher education; it would also be much less than the 50 per cent share they are assured of even after implementation of OBC reservations!

If the upper caste view needs an unexamined notion of merit that ignores the social mechanisms that bring it into existence, the lower caste or pro-reservation view appears to require that merit be emptied of all its content. While this is indeed true of some militant positions, the peculiar circumstances of Indian higher education also allow alternative interpretations. In a situation marked by absurd levels of "hyper-selectivity" — 300,000 aspirants competing for 4000 IIT seats, for example — merit gets reduced to rank in an examination. As educationists know only too well, the examination is a blunt instrument. It is good only for making broad distinctions in levels of ability; it cannot tell us whether a person scoring 85 per cent would definitely make a better engineer or doctor than somebody scoring 80 per cent or 75 per cent or even 70 per cent.

In short, it is only a combination of social compulsion and pure myth that sustains the crazy world of cut-off points and second decimal place differences that dominate the admission season. Such fetishised notions of merit have nothing to do with any genuine differences in ability. The caste composition of higher education could well be changed without any sacrifice of merit simply by instituting a lottery among all candidates of broadly similar levels of ability — say, the top 15 or 25 per cent of a large applicant pool.

But the inequities of our educational system are so deeply entrenched that caste inequalities might persist despite some change. We would then be back where we started — with the apparent dichotomy between merit and social justice in higher education. How do we transcend this dilemma? Is there a way forward where both merit and social justice can be given their due?

(Satish Deshpande is Professor of Sociology at Delhi University; Yogendra Yadav is Senior Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi.)

Handwritten notes: 410-11 m/s, g. caste b. p. d. n. 2/

আসন বৃদ্ধি, ধাপে ধাপে সংরক্ষণ, রফার নানা সূত্র খুঁজছে সরকার

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ২১ মে: ইউপিএ সরকারের দ্বিতীয় বর্ষপূর্তিতে সংরক্ষণ-বিতর্কের সমাধান সূত্র খুঁজতে মরিয়া প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দফতর। সম্ভাব্য নানা সমাধান প্রস্তাব খতিয়ে দেখার পাশাপাশি ডাক্তার ও ছাত্রদের সঙ্গে আলোচনা করে আন্দোলন তুলে নেওয়ার জন্য চাপ দেওয়া হচ্ছে। সংরক্ষণ-বিরোধীরা অবশ্য এখনও তাদের অবস্থানে অনড়। সরকার তাদের একটা প্রস্তাবও মেনে নেয়নি দাবি করে সংরক্ষণ-বিরোধী ছাত্র সংগঠন 'ইউথ ফর ইকুয়ালিটি'র তরফে জানানো হয়েছে, এত সহজে আন্দোলন তোলা হবে না।

কাল মনমোহন সরকারের দ্বিতীয় বর্ষপূর্তি। এই সময় সংরক্ষণ-বিতর্কে ডাক্তারি ছাত্রদের সঙ্গে অন্তত একটা রফার জায়গায় পৌঁছতে চাইছে সরকার। রাজনৈতিক মহলের মতে, দ্বিতীয় বর্ষপূর্তির প্রাক্কালে মনমোহন

সরকারের ভাবমূর্তি যাতে কোনও ভাবেই ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত না হয়, তার জন্য সংরক্ষণ-কাণ্ডে এন্টা চটজন্দি সমাধানসূত্র অত্যন্ত জরুরি। সেই প্রেক্ষিতে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দফতর সব পক্ষকে খুশি করার মতো সূত্র বের করতে উঠেপড়ে লেগেছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দফতর সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, যে চারটি প্রস্তাবের উপরে বর্তমানে সব থেকে বেশি গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হচ্ছে, তা হল,

- উচ্চ শিক্ষার ক্ষেত্রে কোনও শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানে সাধারণ শ্রেণির আসন একটিও না কমানো,
- চালু উচ্চ শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলিতে বর্তমান আসনসংখ্যা বৃদ্ধি,
- দেশের বিভিন্ন প্রান্তে মেডিক্যাল, আইআইটি ও আইআইএমের মতো নতুন শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠান তৈরি এবং
- অর্থনৈতিক ভাবে অনগ্রসর উচ্চবর্ণের ছাত্রদের জন্য আসন সংরক্ষণের ব্যবস্থা।

উচ্চ শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানে আসন বৃদ্ধি করতে হলে পরিকাঠামো সংক্রান্ত যে সব সমস্যা দেখা দেবে, তার প্রেক্ষিতে ধাপে ধাপে অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির জন্য আসন সংরক্ষণের কথাও খতিয়ে দেখা হচ্ছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দফতরের হিসাব অনুযায়ী, সাধারণ আসন সংখ্যা না কমিয়ে অন্যান্য অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির জন্য ২৭ শতাংশ সংরক্ষণ করতে হলে শুধু আইআইটির ক্ষেত্রেই দু'হাজার আসন বাড়তে হবে। যার অর্থ, আরও চারটি নতুন আইআইটি তৈরি। সে ক্ষেত্রে সরকার যদি বছরে একটি আইআইটিও তৈরি করে, তবে প্রথম বছরে মোট ২৭ শতাংশের এক-চতুর্থাংশ আসন অন্যান্য অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির জন্য সংরক্ষণ করা যাবে। নতুন আইআইটি তৈরির জন্য উত্তরাঞ্চল, হিমাচলপ্রদেশ, কেরালা, ওড়িশা এবং মধ্যপ্রদেশের মতো কয়েকটি রাজ্যের কথা ভাবছে

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

আসন বৃদ্ধি, ধাপে ধাপে সংরক্ষণ

প্রথম পাতার পর

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দফতর। মেডিক্যাল কলেজগুলির ক্ষেত্রেও একই নীতি প্রয়োগ করা হবে।

এ ছাড়া, জয়েন্ট এন্ট্রান্স জাতীয় পরীক্ষার মেধা-তালিকা থেকে প্রথম হাজার জন তফশিলি জাতি ও উপজাতি এবং অন্যান্য অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির ছাত্র-ছাত্রীদের বেছে নিয়ে তাদের বিশেষ প্রশিক্ষণ দেওয়ার প্রস্তাবও খতিয়ে দেখা হচ্ছে। এ কাজে বেসরকারি সংস্থাগুলির কাছেও অর্থনৈতিক সাহায্য চাওয়ার কথা ভাবা হচ্ছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দফতরের বক্তব্য, সরকারের সঙ্গে হাতে হাত মিলিয়ে কাজ করার জন্য বেসরকারি সংস্থাগুলিকে প্রস্তাব দেওয়া হবে।

এই প্রচেষ্টার পাশাপাশি আন্দোলন তুলে নেওয়ার জন্য আবাসিক ডাক্তারদের উপরে চাপ সৃষ্টি করছে সরকার। এইমসের আন্দোলনকারী ডাক্তারদের হাতে রীতিমতো নোটস ধরিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে।

আন্দোলনকারীদের জায়গায় নয়া আবাসিক ডাক্তার নিয়োগ করার জন্য কাল থেকে সাক্ষাৎকার নেওয়া শুরু হবে। তার আগেই নতুন ডাক্তারদের জন্য বর্তমান আবাসিক ডাক্তারদের হস্টেল খালি করে দিতে বলা হয়েছে।

কিন্তু আন্দোলনকারীরা অনড়। এইমসের আবাসিক ডাক্তারদের মুখপাত্র বলেন, "সরকারি নোটস অমান্য করার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছি। ঘর খালি করা হবে না।" তাঁদের অভিযোগ, আসন সংখ্যা বাড়াবার কথা বললেও সরকার তাদের আসল দাবিতে কান দিচ্ছে না। আন্দোলনকারীদের একাংশ অবশ্য কিছুটা নরম হয়ে জানিয়েছে, সরকারের প্রস্তাব ভেবে দেখা যেতে পারে। কিন্তু গোড়া থেকে ছাত্রদের সঙ্গে সরকার যে 'আচরণ' করেছে, তা নিয়ে সকলেই ক্ষুব্ধ। আজ দিল্লিতে কেন্দ্রীয় স্বাস্থ্যসচিবের সঙ্গে আন্দোলনকারীদের বৈঠকেও জট খোলেনি। ইন্ডিয়ান মেডিক্যাল অ্যাসোসিয়েশনের মুম্বই শাখার

তরফেও আজ আসন সংখ্যা বাড়াবার সরকারি প্রস্তাব খারিজ করা হয়েছে। চলছে সংরক্ষণপন্থীদের আন্দোলনও। পটনায় সংরক্ষণপন্থী ডাক্তারদের আন্দোলনে পুলিশের লাঠি চালানোর প্রতিবাদে আজও বিহারের হাসপাতালগুলিতে চরম দুর্ভোগের শিকার হয়েছেন রোগীরা।

বেসরকারি শিক্ষাপ্রতিষ্ঠানে বেশি টাকা নিয়ে ছাত্র ভর্তির ব্যাপারে সরকারের নজর দেওয়া উচিত বলে মন্তব্য করেন সিপিএম পলিটব্যুরো সদস্য বৃন্দা কারাট। তাঁর কথায়, "ক্যাপিটেশন ফি নিয়ে সাধারণ মানের ছাত্র ভর্তি করে মেধার সঙ্গে আপোস করছে কিছু বেসরকারি শিক্ষাপ্রতিষ্ঠান।" এ নিয়ে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের সঙ্গে তাঁরা কথা বলবেন।

22 MAY 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

On another quota, a rethink

MONOBINA GUPTA

9. 10. 2006

New Delhi, May 21: The Centre is likely to go back on its commitment to providing a 25 per cent reservation of seats for children from weaker sections in private unaided primary schools.

Faced with protests from the private school lobby, the government is preparing to drop the quota clause from the free and compulsory education bill that has been in the pipeline for four years.

The move comes at a time when the human resource development ministry is seeking to introduce a bill to give 27 per cent reservation to students from Other Backward Classes (OBC) in higher education in-

stitutions.

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Both bills have a similar trajectory. The free and compulsory education bill will translate into action the government's commitment in the 96th Constitutional Amendment Act to provide free education to all children in the 6-14 age group.

Similarly, the controversial bill for OBC reservation will fulfil the government's commitment, made in the 93rd Constitutional Amendment Act, to introduce a quota for students from socially and educationally backward sections.

The question of a quota in government schools does not arise since they tend to get children primarily from weak-

er sections in any case.

Private schools have been lobbying the government to get the clause scrapped. They argue that children from weaker sections will find it difficult to cope with the syllabus. Their backgrounds will be very different from those that usually study in these schools, causing a mismatch the authorities will have trouble coping with.

It is also true that if these schools were to make space for underprivileged children, they would have to accept loss of some income.

Members of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), a body that helped draw up the bill, say they will not allow the government to

scrap the quota.

There have been precedents, however, of the private school lobby getting its way with the government and the examination boards.

Recently, the Central Board of Secondary Education left it to the discretion of private schools to give free education to a girl if she were the only child of her parents. But it was made mandatory for government schools.

Barring a few, most Delhi schools have reneged on their commitment to keeping a 15 per cent quota for children from poor families. The commitment was part of the understanding with the Delhi government that gave them land at a concessional rate.

22 MAY 2006

THE TELEGRAPH

ক্ষোভ নলেজ কমিশনেও, ইস্তফা দুই কর্তার

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ২২ মে: কোনও ওয়ুথের কাজ হচ্ছে না।

মনমোহন সিংহের আরও এক বার আবেদন বা হস্টেল ছাড়ার জন্য ধর্মঘটীদের হুমকি, সব কিছুই বার্থ হয়েছিল বিরোধী আন্দোলন প্রত্যাহারে। তারই মধ্যে ইউপিএ সরকারের দ্বিতীয় বর্ষপূর্তি পালনের দিনে অর্জন সিংহের নানা মন্তব্যে মুগ্ধ নলেজ কমিশনের দুই সদস্যের পদত্যাগ সরকারের অস্বস্তি আরও কয়েক গুণ বাড়িয়ে দিল। রাতে সরকারের দ্বিতীয় বর্ষপূর্তি অনুষ্ঠানের মঞ্চ থেকে আন্দোলন তুলে নেওয়ার জন্য ধর্মঘটীদের কাছে ফের আবেদন করলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। ধর্মঘটীরাও জানিয়েছে, তাঁরা ইতিবাচক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি নিয়েই এই আবেদনকে দেখেছেন। যদিও আন্দোলন তুলে নেওয়ার কথা তাঁরা বলেননি। ধর্মঘটীরা আশা করছেন, সরকার তাঁদের ফের আলোচনায় ডাকবেন এবং তা থেকে উভয় পক্ষের গ্রহণযোগ্য কোনও সমাধানসুত্র বেরিয়ে আসবে। 'ইস্ফা' কর: ঙ্গুমালিটি'র মুখপাত্র ডা. কুমার হ'ই বলেছেন, "প্রধানমন্ত্রীর প্রতি আমাদের প্রাণ এ আস্থা আছে। কিন্তু আমরা আমাদের কথাটাও বলতে চাই। এটা একপেশে একটা বিষয় হতে পারে না।"

টিক এ রকম জটিলতার আশঙ্কাই করাছিলেন ইউপিএ নেতৃত্ব। তাই সংরক্ষণ বিরোধী আন্দোলন প্রশমিত করতে গাত সোমবার থেকে তৎপরতা শুরু হয়েছিল। প্রধানমন্ত্রীও আন্দোলন প্রত্যাহারের অনুরোধ করেছিলেন! কিন্তু কিছুতেই কিছু হল না। বরং সংরক্ষণ প্রত্যাহারের অবলা বিরোধিতা করে প্রধানমন্ত্রী গঠিত নলেজ কমিশন থেকে ইস্তফা দিয়ে দুই ব'য়ান সদস্য সরকারের অস্বস্তি চরমে পৌঁছে দিলেন। ও দিকে, ছাত্ররা কিছুটা নমনীয় হলেও অনশন চলছে। এখন তাঁদের বক্তব্য, অনগ্রসরদের জন্য সংরক্ষণের বিষয়টি নিয়ে সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার আগে একটি বিশেষজ্ঞ কমিটিকে দিয়ে বর্তমানে চালু সংরক্ষণের বিষয়টি করাতে হবে। এই পরিস্থিতিতে ইউপিএ নীর্থ নেতৃত্ব কার্যত দিশেহারা।

উচ্চ শিক্ষায় সংরক্ষণের প্রস্তাবে নলেজ কমিশনের আহ্বায়ক সদস্য প্রতাপ ভানু মৈত্র এবং সমাজতাত্ত্বিক আশ্রে বেতেই আগেই আপত্তি জানান। আজ প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে দেওয়া চার পৃষ্ঠার পদত্যাগপত্রে মৌটা বলেন, "উচ্চ শিক্ষা নিয়ে আপনার সরকারের সাম্প্রতিক কিছু ঘোষণার প্রেক্ষিতে এই সার কথাটাই

বুঝেছি যে, কমিশনে আমার সদস্য হস্টে থাকটা আর কোনও উদ্দেশ্য সিদ্ধ করবে না।" তাঁর আরও বক্তব্য, কেন্দ্রীয় উচ্চ শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানে অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির সংরক্ষণ দেওয়ার জন্য সরকার যে সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে, তা সর্ব্বৈব ভুল। কারণ এতে উচ্চ শিক্ষার উন্নতি হবে না। এটি শুধুই রাজনৈতিক খেলা। অন্য দিকে আশ্রে বেতেই সরকারকে বলেছেন, অনগ্রসরদের তুলে আনার জন্য সাদর্থক প্রচেষ্টার পক্ষপাতী হলেও, নির্দিষ্ট সংখ্যার কোটা বেধে দিয়ে তা করা যায় বলে তিনি মনে করেন না। বরং কোটা বেধে দিয়ে সরকার অন্য সাদর্থক প্রয়াস থেকে বিরত থাকার পথই প্রশস্ত করছে।

আজ আন্দোলনকারী ডাক্তারদের সঙ্গে কেন্দ্রীয় স্বাস্থ্য সচিবের দ্বিতীয় দফার বৈঠকও বার্থ হয়। দিল্লি-সহ দেশের একাধিক হাসপাতালের পরিস্থিতি খারাপ হচ্ছে। বিশেষত এইমসে। এ জন্য স্বাস্থ্যমন্ত্রী অধুমণি রামভসের 'দায়িত্বজ্ঞানহীন ও অপ্রয়োজনীয়' মন্তব্যকেই দাঁয়ী করছেন এইমসের শিক্ষকরা। পটনায় সংরক্ষণপন্থীরা আন্দোলন প্রত্যাহার করলেও, বিরোধীদের সুর নরমের লক্ষণই নেই। রাতে আমদাবাদের পুর হাসপাতালগুলির প্রায় ৭০০ জুনিয়র ডাক্তার ধর্মঘণ্টের ডাক দেন। এরই মধ্যে সামাজিক ন্যায়মন্ত্রী মীরা কুমার বলেন, সংরক্ষণ চালু করার জন্য উপযুক্ত ব্যবস্থা না-নিলে, তাদের বাধ্য করার জন্য সরকার আইন বেসরকারি ক্ষেত্রে দু'বছর সময় দেওয়া হবে। তার মধ্যে তারা আনবে। ইতিমধ্যেই বহু বেসরকারি ক্ষেত্র সরকারের সংরক্ষণ নীতির তীর বিরোধিতা করেছে।

মনমোহন আজ বিষয়টি নিয়ে অন্যদের সঙ্গেও আলোচনা করেছেন। রাষ্ট্রপতিকে তিনি পরিস্থিতি ব্যাখ্যা করেন। এ ছাড়াও, সিপিএমের সাধারণ সম্পাদক প্রকাশ কারাটের সঙ্গেও কথা বলেন। বৈঠকে কারাট জানান, অনগ্রসরদের জন্য আসন বাড়িয়ে সংরক্ষণের ব্যবস্থা করার সঙ্গে সরকার দেখুক, অনগ্রসরদের ধনী অংশ যাতে এর সুযোগ না-পায়।

ওই বৈঠকের পরেই ইউপিএ-র নীর্থ নেতৃত্ব বাস্তব হয়ে পড়েন বর্ষপূর্তি অনুষ্ঠান নিয়ে। সেখানে যখন সনিয়া গান্ধী বক্তৃতা দিচ্ছেন, তখন দশ মিনিটের জন্য নিজেদের নিজেদের আলো নিভিয়ে ব্লাক আউট করেন আন্দোলনরত ছাত্ররা। জন্মদিনে এই প্রতীকী অক্ষরই মনমোহন-সরকারের সব থেকে বড় অস্বস্তি।

ছাত্রদের ফের অনুরোধ প্রধানমন্ত্রীর



কলকাতায় অনশনরত দুই মুখ / সোমবার / — নিজস্ব চিত্র

Reservation — an alternative proposal

In this second and concluding part of their series, the authors offer a method to ensure both merit and social justice are taken into account.

Satish Deshpande & Yogendra Yadav

THE ALTERNATIVE proposed here is rooted in the recognition that we need to go beyond a simple-minded reduction of 'merit' and 'social justice' to singular and mutually exclusive categories. In reality, both merit and social justice are multi-dimensional, and the pursuit of one does not require us to abandon the other. The proposal seeks to identify the viable common ground that permits simultaneous commitment to both social justice and excellence. It seeks to operationalise a policy that is morally justified, intellectually sound, politically defensible, and administratively viable.

Let us present the basic principles that underlie this proposal before getting into operational details. First of all, this proposal is based on a firm commitment to policies of affirmative action flowing both from the constitutional obligation to realise social justice and also from the overall success of the experience of reservations in the last 50 years. Secondly, we recognise the moral imperative to extend affirmative action to educational opportunities, for a lack of these opportunities results in the inter-generational reproduction of inequalities and severely restricts the positive effects of job reservations. Thirdly, it needs to be remembered that the end of affirmative action can be served by various means including reservation. The state's basic commitment is to the end, not any particular means. Finally, flowing from the experience of reservations for socially and educationally backward classes (SEBCs), we need to recognise that there are multiple, cross-cutting, and overlapping sources of inequality of educational opportunities, all of which need redress. This is what our proposal seeks to do.

The proposal involves computing scores for 'academic merit' and for 'social disadvantage' and then combining the two for admission to higher educational institutions. Since the academic evaluation is less controversial, we concentrate here on the evaluation of comparative social disadvantage. We suggest that the social disadvantage score should be divided into its group and individual components. For the group component, we consider disadvantages based on caste and community, gender, and region. These scores must not be decided arbitrarily or merely on the basis of impressions. We suggest that these disadvantages should be calibrated on the basis of available statistics on representation in higher education of different castes/communities and regions, each of these being considered separately for males and females. The required data could come from the National Sample Survey or other available sources. It would be best, of course, if a special national survey were commissioned for this purpose.

Besides group disadvantages, this scheme also takes individual disadvantages into consideration. While a large number of factors determine individual disadvantages (family history, generational depth of literacy, sibling education, economic resources, etc.), we believe there are two robust indicators of individual disadvantage that can be operationally used in the system of admission to public institutions: parental occupation and the type of school where a person passed the high school examination. These two variables allow us to capture the effect of most of the individual disadvantages, including the family's educational history and economic circumstances.

In the accompanying tables, we illustrate how this scheme could be operationalised. It needs to be underlined that the weightages proposed here are tentative, based on our limited information, and meant only to illustrate the scheme. The exact weights could be decided after examining more evidence. We suggest that weightage for academic merit and social disadvantage be distributed in the ratio of 80:20. The academic score could be converted to a standardised score

Table A

GROUP DISADVANTAGE: Caste-Community, Region and Gender					
Up to 12 points to be awarded based on this matrix.					
Community/Zones		Zone I Most Backward	Zone II	Zone III	Zone IV Most Developed
'Lower' OBC/ MBC/Muslim OBC	Female	12	10	8	6
	Male	10	8	6	4
'Upper' OBC/ Non-OBC Muslim	Female	10	8	6	4
	Male	8	6	4	2
All Others	Female	4	3	2	1
	Male	2	1	0	0

Table B

INDIVIDUAL DISADVANTAGE: Type of Schooling			
Ordinary government school in village/small town gets maximum of 5 points. Exclusive English medium public school in metro gets zero points.			
	Village /Town Up to 50,000	City Up to 3,00,000	Large City / Metro
Ordinary Government School	5	4	3
Private School (non-English medium)	3	2	1
Private English Medium School	2	1	0
Special Residential Govt. School (Navodaya/Sainik)	1	1	0
Exclusive/ Residential 'public' School	0	0	0

Table C

INDIVIDUAL DISADVANTAGE: Family Background			
Unorganised sector low-pay occupations awarded highest points, i.e. 3. Managerial/Professional and high level government jobs awarded zero points.			
Mother's occupation	Father's occupation		
	Managerial/ professional/ big business/ Class I and II	Clerical/ lower professional/ medium business/ class III and IV	All others (non Income Tax paying)
Managerial/professional/ big business/ Class I and II	0	0	0
Clerical/ lower professional/ medium business/ class III and IV	0	1	2
All others (non Income Tax paying)	0	2	3

on a scale of 0-80, while the social disadvantage score would range from 0 to a maximum of 20.

Awarding social disadvantage points

Table A shows how the group disadvantage points can be awarded. There are three axes of group disadvantage considered here: the relative backwardness of the region one comes from; one's caste and community (only non-SC-ST groups are considered here); and one's gender. The zones in the top row refer to a classification of regions — this can be at State or even sub-State region level — based on indicators of backwardness that are commonly used and can be agreed upon. Thus Zone I is the most backward region while Zone IV is the most developed region. The disadvantage points would thus decrease from left to right for each caste group and gender.

The castes and communities identified here are clubbed according to broadly similar levels of poverty and education indicators (once again the details of this can be agreed upon). The lower OBCs and Most Backward Castes along with OBC Muslims are considered most disadvantaged or least-represented among the educated, affluent, etc., while upper caste Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Jains, Parsis, etc., are considered to be the most 'forward' communities.

Disadvantage points thus decrease from top to bottom. Gender is built into this matrix, with women being given disadvantage points depending on their other attributes, that is, caste and region. Thus the hypothetical numbers in this table indicate different degrees of relative disadvantage based on all three criteria, and most importantly, also on

the interaction effects among the three. Thus, a woman from the most backward region who belongs to the lower OBC, MBC, or Muslim OBC groups gets the maximum score of 12, while a male from the forward communities from the most developed region gets no disadvantage points at all.

Tables B and C work in a similar manner for determining individual disadvantage. For these tables, all group variables are excluded. Table B looks at the type of school the person passed his or her secondary examination from, and the size of the village, town, or city where this school was located. Anyone going to an ordinary government school in a village or small town gets the maximum of 5 points in this matrix. The gradation of schools is done according to observed quality of education and implied family resources, and this could also be refined. A student from an exclusive English medium public school in a large metro gets no disadvantage points.

Table C looks at parental occupation as a proxy for family resources (that is, income wealth, etc., which are notoriously difficult to ascertain directly). Since this variable is vulnerable to falsification and would need some efforts at verification, we have limited the maximum points awarded here to three. Children of parents who are outside the organised sector and are below the taxable level of income get the maximum points, and the occupation of both parents is considered. Those with either parent in Class I or II jobs of the government, or in managerial or professional jobs get no points at all. Intermediate jobs in the organised sector, including Class III and IV jobs in the government, are reckoned to be better

placed than those in the unorganised, low pay sector.

Combining the scores in the three matrices will give the total disadvantage score, which can then be added to the standardised academic merit score to give each candidate's final score. Admissions for all non-SC-ST candidates, that is, for 77.5 per cent of all seats, can then be based on this total score.

Differences and advantages

While our proposal shares with the proposal mooted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) the commitment to affirmative action and the desire to extend it to educational opportunities, the scheme we propose differs from the Ministry's proposal in many ways. The Ministry's proposal seeks to create a bloc of 'reserved' seats. Our proposal applies to all the seats not covered by the existing reservation for the SC, ST, and other categories. The MHRD proposal recognises only group disadvantages and uses caste as the sole criterion of group disadvantage in educational inequalities. We too acknowledge the significance of group disadvantages and that of caste as the single most important predictor of educational inequalities. But our scheme seeks to fine-tune the identification by recognising other group disadvantages such as region and gender. Moreover, our scheme is also able to address the interaction effects between different axes of disadvantage (such as region, caste, and gender, or type of school and type of location, etc.).

While recognising group disadvantages, our scheme provides some weightage to individual disadvantages relating to family background and type of schooling. Our scheme also recognises that people of all castes may suffer from individual disadvantages, and offers redress for such disadvantages to the upper castes as well. While the MHRD proposal is based on an all-or-nothing approach to recognising disadvantages (either you are an OBC or you are not), our proposal allows for flexibility in dealing with variations in degrees of disadvantage.

The scheme we propose here is a modified version of one that was designed for the selection process of a well-known international fellowship programme for higher education, where it was successful for some years. Thousands of applications have already been screened using this scheme. A similar scheme has been used for admissions to Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. The working of this scheme does not seem to offer any insurmountable operational difficulties, despite the vast expansion in scale that some contexts might involve.

In the final analysis, the most critical advantage of a scheme such as the one we are proposing is that it helps to push thinking on social justice along constructive and rational lines. One of the inescapable dilemmas of caste-based affirmative action policies is that they cannot help intensifying caste identities. The debate then gets vitiated because it concentrates on the identities rather than on the valid social reasons why those identities are used as indicators of disadvantage. Our scheme clearly links caste identities to measurable empirical indicators of disadvantage. It thus helps to de-essentialise caste and to focus attention on the relative progress made by these communities.

Thus groups such as Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, etc., occupy particular positions in this scheme purely by virtue of the levels of educational advantage or disadvantage. The scheme allows policies to be calibrated according to the changing relative positions of different groups, and takes care of such issues as poor upper castes, 'creamy layer,' etc. It reminds us, in short, that caste or community matter not in themselves, but because they continue to be important indicators of tangible disadvantages in our unequal and unjust society.

(This proposal has been developed in consultation with many social scientists.)

Quota with more seats

9. C. S. D. Bhatnagar 29/5



A medical student gives blood as a mark of protest in New Delhi on Tuesday. (AFP)

Bill next session on 27% reservation

Protesters express outrage

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, May 23: The government tonight decided to implement a 27 per cent quota for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in higher educational institutions from the academic year beginning June 2007 while increasing seats for general-category students.

A meeting of the coordination committee of the United Progressive Alliance chose to enforce the measure by introducing a bill in the monsoon session of Parliament, which will begin sometime in July.

"The percentage of reservation for OBCs will be fixed at 27 per cent. Legislation for this purpose will be brought in Parliament in the monsoon session," defence minister Pranab Mukherjee said after a resolution was passed at a three-hour meeting of the UPA committee and the Left.

Hoping to address the concerns of quota protesters, Mukherjee said the number of general-category seats in educational institutions under the Union government would be increased.

Medical students on a hunger strike at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences were disappointed with the development.

ON THE CARDS

- Bill for 27% OBC quotas in central institutions in monsoon session
- More seats in general category
- Quotas to kick in from June 2007
- Oversight panel to draw time-bound road map
- Deans, directors and VCs to work out details of quota and increase in seats
- Panel to submit report by August 31

Pratap Bhanu Mehta, who resigned from the Prime Minister's Knowledge Commission yesterday, told a TV channel that the decision marked a "black chapter in the history of Indian education".

Under the package cleared tonight, an oversight committee will be constituted to draw up a time-bound road map to implement the decisions. Smaller groups of deans, directors and vice-chancellors of the institutions concerned will be set up to work out details of reservation and increase the number of seats.

The oversight committee will put together the recommendations of these groups and submit a report by August 31.

Mukherjee said the UPA and the Left resolved that the 93rd amendment to the Constitution, providing for reservation in educational institutions, would be implemented in letter and spirit.

The resolution to implement the 93rd amendment was adopted after human resource development minister Arjun Singh, who had set the ball rolling for fixing the quota at 27 per cent, made a presentation at the meeting.

At a meeting earlier in the day, the Congress's southern allies, along with the Left, had put pressure on the government to issue an ordinance to implement the quota but that move was jettisoned in favour of a bill. An ordinance, it was felt, would only stoke the fire of controversy.

A bill, rather than an ordinance, was as far as the section within the government that wanted to move more cautiously could go, giving in on the larger issue of reservation and its implementation at one go with a 27 per cent content.

Such a decision was not on the committee's agenda, but the intense pressure by the southern MPs forced the government's hand. S. Ramadoss, the PMK leader, was constantly interacting with the Left till the evening meeting.

■ See Page 6

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, May 23: First reactions to the government's quota announcement from protesting doctors and medical students ranged from "outrageous" to "we're not surprised".

"The decision is outrageous and audacious," Shashmit Sarangi, a representative of the Youth for Equality spearheading the agitation, told PTI. Ankur, a member of the legal committee of the organization who did not give a second name, said: "We're not surprised. We expected this to happen."

A more structured response came from Subrata Mandal, a senior resident doctor at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences. He said: "The Prime Minister should explain why the government cannot or does not want to set up an independent commission to examine the impact of reservation in all these years. We're ready to understand the reasons," Mandal said.

Constituting an independent commission has been the demand of the protesters, but the announcement tonight by the government only spoke of an oversight committee. It did say, though, that institution heads will be involved in the process.

উচ্চশিক্ষায় ও বি সি-র জন্য সংরক্ষণ রাজ্যেও

প্রসূন আচার্য

এত দিন ধরে বন্ধ রাখা দরজা এ বার খুলে যাচ্ছে। বিহার, উত্তরপ্রদেশ, তামিলনাড়ুর মতো পশ্চিমবঙ্গেও মেডিক্যাল আর ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং-সহ উচ্চশিক্ষায় অন্যান্য অনগ্রসর শ্রেণি বা ও বি সি-র জন্য সংরক্ষণ ব্যবস্থা চালু হতে চলেছে। সি পি এমের রাজ্য নেতৃত্ব সবুজ সঙ্কেত দিয়েছেন। তবে ও বি সি-দের জন্য সংরক্ষণ চালু করে যাতে কেন্দ্রের মতো বিপাকে পড়তে না-হয়, সেই জন্য মেডিক্যাল ও ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং কলেজে আগে থেকেই আসন বাড়াতে চায় রাজ্য সরকার।

সি পি এমের রাজ্য সম্পাদক তথা বামফ্রন্টের চেয়ারম্যান বিমান বসু বলেন, “ও বি সি কমিশনের রিপোর্ট জমা রয়েছে। এ বার সরকার তা কার্যকর করবে।” কবে সংরক্ষণ চালু হবে, তিনি তা নির্দিষ্ট করে বলেননি। তাঁর কথায়, “কমিশনের রিপোর্ট সরকার খতিয়ে দেখবে। আলোচনা হবে বামফ্রন্টেও। তার পরেই তা দ্রুত কার্যকর হবে।” এই নিয়ে বিমানবাবুর সঙ্গে মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর কথাও হয়েছে। তবে কেন্দ্রীয় আইনের খসড়া হাতে পেয়েই রাজ্য সরকার এগোতে চায়। নতুন আইনে রাজ্যের শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানে সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে কী বলা আছে, তা দেখেই চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত নেবে মন্ত্রিসভা।

দলের তরফে তফসিলি জাতি, উপজাতি ও অন্যান্য অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির দায়িত্বে আছেন প্রাক্তন শিক্ষামন্ত্রী কান্তি বিশ্বাস। তিনি বলেন, “জনসংখ্যার ভিত্তিতে রাজ্যে ও বি সি-র সংখ্যা ১৫% হলেও তাঁদের মধ্যে অর্ধেক, ৭% সংরক্ষণের আওতায় পড়ছেন। নিয়ম অনুযায়ী মেডিক্যাল, ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং-সহ

উচ্চশিক্ষার সর্বত্রই তাঁদের জন্য আসন সংরক্ষিত হওয়ার কথা।” কান্তিবাবু জানান, এই ব্যাপারে সরকারি নির্দেশ থাকলেও মেডিক্যাল, ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং-সহ বেশির ভাগ ক্ষেত্রেই তা কার্যকর হয়নি।

ও বি সি-দের জন্য সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে দলে বিতর্ক ছিল। কিন্তু কেন্দ্র সংবিধান সংশোধন করায় রাজ্য তা মানতে বাধ্য। অনিল বিশ্বাস রাজ্য সম্পাদক থাকাকালীন মেডিক্যাল, ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিংয়ে ও বি সি-দের জন্য সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে কথা হলেও নানা মহলের আপত্তিতে বিষয়টি বিশেষ এগোয়নি। বিমানবাবু আদিবাসী ও অনগ্রসরদের অগ্রাধিকার দেওয়ার ব্যাপারে দীর্ঘদিন ধরেই সরব। মন্ত্রিসভাতেও তিনি অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির প্রতিনিধিদের উপরে জোর দিয়েছেন। এখন শিক্ষাতেও সংরক্ষণ চান।

রাজ্য সরকার মেডিক্যাল আসন বৃদ্ধির জন্য আই এম এ-র কাছে এবং ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিংয়ের ক্ষেত্রে এ আই সি টি

এ-র কাছে আবেদন করবে। উচ্চশিক্ষায় ও বি সি-দের জন্য আসন বাড়ানোর বিষয়টি ইউ জি সি-কেও জানাতে হবে। উচ্চশিক্ষায় নতুন মন্ত্রী হয়েছেন সুদর্শন রায়চৌধুরী। সব দিক খতিয়ে দেখেই প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা নেবেন তিনি।

বিশ্বনাথপ্রতাপ সিংহ মণ্ডল কমিশনের রিপোর্ট রূপায়ণ করার সময় দেশ জুড়ে বিতর্ক ও ছাত্র-বিক্ষোভ হয়েছিল। তৎকালীন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী জ্যোতি বসু কিন্তু উত্তরপ্রদেশ, বিহারের মতো এ রাজ্যে পিছড়েবর্গের অস্তিত্ব কার্যত স্বীকার করেননি। পরে কেন্দ্রের নির্দেশে এ রাজ্যেও ও বি সি-র তালিকা তৈরি হয়। কিন্তু শিক্ষা বা চাকরির ক্ষেত্রে তা কার্যকর হয়নি। বিষয়টি নিয়ে বামপন্থীদের একাংশের মধ্যেও ক্ষোভ ছিল। অন্য পক্ষ ‘এ রাজ্যে জাত ব্যবস্থা নেই’ বলে বিষয়টি এড়িয়ে যেত।

সি পি এম জাত-ভিত্তিক দল নয়। তাই সংরক্ষণ যাতে তাঁদের ভোট-ব্যাঞ্চে প্রভাব না-ফেলে, সেটা দেখাই এখন নেতাদের উদ্দেশ্য। তাই মুম্বই-দিল্লিতে ছাত্রদের উপরে লাঠিচালনার নিন্দা করে বিমানবাবু বলেন, “সংরক্ষণের উপরে জোর দিতে গিয়ে মেধাকে যাতে অস্বীকার করা না-হয়, সে-দিকে নজর রাখতে হবে কেন্দ্রকে। যে-রাজ্যে ও বি সি-দের জন্য যে-রকম সংরক্ষণ ব্যবস্থা চালু আছে, মেডিক্যাল, ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং-সহ উচ্চশিক্ষার ক্ষেত্রেও ঠিক সেই ভাবে অতিরিক্ত আসন বরাদ্দ হোক। যাতে সাধারণ কোটার ছাত্রছাত্রীরা নিজেদের বঞ্চিত মনে করতে না-পারেন।”

বিমানবাবুর দাবি, এই আসন বৃদ্ধির জন্য অবিলম্বে কেন্দ্রকে অতিরিক্ত আট হাজার কোটি টাকা বরাদ্দ করতে হবে। সি পি এম চায়, সেই টাকার একটা বড় অংশ যেন এ রাজ্যেও খরচ হয়।

আপনার মতে

আসন বাড়িয়েই কি
সংরক্ষণ-বিতর্কের
সমাধান সম্ভব?

এসএমএস করুন ৮২৪৩ নম্বরে

হ্যাঁ হলে লিখুন: Apoll a

না হলে লিখুন: Apoll b

উত্তর পাঠান হাচ, এয়ারটেল, টাটা
ইন্ডিকম, রিলায়েন্স ইন্ডিয়া অথবা
বিএসএনএল মোবাইল থেকে।

পশ্চিমবঙ্গের কি অবিলম্বে
চুক্তি-চাষ শুরু করা উচিত?

হ্যাঁ ৬৩% না ৩৭%

21 MAY 2006

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

আগামী বছর জুন থেকেই চালু সংরক্ষণ

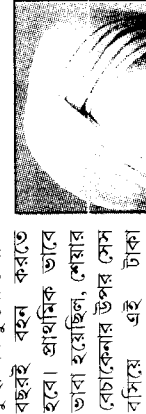
নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৩ মে: ধীরে চলা আর গেল না। শরিকদের চাপের মুখে সংরক্ষণ চালু করা নিয়ে সুস্পষ্ট অবস্থান ঘোষণা করতেই হল কেন্দ্রকে। জানাতে হল, সংবিধানের ৯৩ তম সংশোধন কার্যকর করার ব্যাপারে ইউপিএ সরকার বন্ধপরিকর। আগামী বছর জুন মাসে নতুন শিক্ষাবর্ষের শুরু থেকে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের এন্ট্রিয়ারতুল্য উচ্চশিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলির ২৭ শতাংশ আসন অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির জন্য সংরক্ষিত থাকবে। এ জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় আইন তৈরি করতে সংসদের বাদল অধিবেশনে বিল আনবে সরকার।

সংরক্ষণের পথে যাতে সরকার না হাঁটে, সে জন্য গত কয়েক সপ্তাহ ধরে দেশ জুড়ে আন্দোলন চলিয়ে যাচ্ছিলেন ডাক্তারিরা ছাত্রেরা। আন্দোলন ছড়িয়েছিল অন্যান্য শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানেও। তার জেরেই ধীরে চলার নীতি নিয়েছিল কেন্দ্র। বলা হচ্ছিল, সংরক্ষণের ফলে সাধারণ ছাত্রদের স্বার্থ ক্ষুণ্ণ হবে না। আসন বাড়িয়ে তবেই চালু করা হবে সংরক্ষণ। কিন্তু তাতে অনেক সময় লাগবে, এই যুক্তিতে শরিকরা কড়া আপত্তি তোলায় আগামী বছর থেকেই সংরক্ষণ চালু করার কথা ঘোষণা করে দিতে বাধ্য হল সরকার। সংরক্ষণ

চালু করার জন্য শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলিতে আসন সংখ্যা বাড়ানো হবে, ফের এই আশ্বাস সত্ত্বেও আন্দোলনকারীরা বলছে, সরকার তাদের পিছনে ছুরি মারল। রাত এগারোটা নাগাদ সরকারের সিদ্ধান্ত জানার পরেই পরবর্তী পদক্ষেপ নিয়ে আলোচনায় বাসেন আন্দোলনের নেতারা। রাত পর্যন্ত সেই বৈঠক চলে। তার পরে বিক্ষোভকারীদের তরফে জানানো হয়, গত দশ দিন ধরে সন্তোষজনক সমাধানের আশ্বাস দেওয়ার পরে সরকার যা করল তা লজ্জাজনক। তাঁদের ধর্মঘট চলবে।

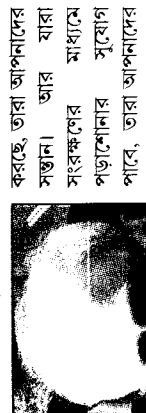
আজ বাম-সরকার সমন্বয় কমিটির ডিএমকে-পিএমকে থেকে শুরু করে সিপিআই, লালুপ্রসাদ যাদব থেকে শরদ পওয়ার, সকলেই অবিলম্বে সংরক্ষণ চালু করার দাবি জানান। সব দিক বজায় রেখে সংরক্ষণ-বিতর্ক মেটানোর ভার প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ দিয়েছিলেন তাঁর প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়কে। তাঁর তৈরি একটি নোট এ দিন বাম ও শরিক নেতাদের হাতে তুলে দেওয়া হয়। তাতে আন্দোলনকারীদের না চাটিয়ে কী ভাবে সংরক্ষণ চালু করা সম্ভব তার উপায় বলা ছিল। প্রণববাবুর হিসাব অনুসারে অসংরক্ষিত আসনের

সংখ্যা অপরিবর্তিত রাখতে হলে ৫৪ শতাংশ আসন বাতানো সরকার। এ জন্য মোট দশ হাজার কোটি টাকা দরকার হবে। এর মধ্যে এককালীন সাত হাজার আটশো কোটি টাকা খরচ হবে, আর দু'হাজার দু'শো কোটি টাকার অতিরিক্ত খরচ প্রতি বছরই বহন করতে হবে। প্রাথমিক ভাবে তাবা হয়েছিল, শেয়ার বোচাকেনার উপর সেন বসিয়ে এই টাকা জোগাড় করা হবে। সে ক্ষেত্রে, এই খাতে যেমন যেমন টাকা আসবে, সেই অনুযায়ী বিভিন্ন প্রতিষ্ঠানের পরিকাঠামো বাড়ানো হবে এবং যেখানে তা করা হয়ে যাবে সেখানে সংরক্ষণ চালু করা হবে। অর্থাৎ, সর্বত্র সংরক্ষণ চালু করতে তিন থেকে পাঁচ বছর সময় লাগবে বলে সরকারের হিসাবেই ধরা হয়েছে।



এই নোট হাতে পেয়েই ক্ষোভে ফেটে পড়েন শরদ পওয়ার প্রম্ন তোলে, কেন শুধু সরকারি

পিএমকে নেতা রামভদ্র। তিনি প্রম্ন তোলেন, কেন সরকার সংরক্ষণ চালু করতে এত টালবাহানা করছে। কেনই বা এখনকার অসংরক্ষিত আসন সংখ্যা বজায় রেখে তবুই সংরক্ষণের কথা ভাবা হচ্ছে? ক্ষুব্ধ রামভদ্র বলেন, "আপনারা বলছেন যারা আন্দোলন করছে, তারা আপনারা সন্তান। আর যারা সংরক্ষণের মাধ্যমে পড়াশোনার সুযোগ পাবে, তারা আপনারা সন্তান নয়?"



ইতিমধ্যে জানা গিয়েছে, এইমাসে এমডি বা আরও উচ্চশিক্ষার জন্য সেখান থেকে এমবিবিএস পাশ করা ছাত্রদের জন্য ২৫ শতাংশ আসন সংরক্ষিত আছে। এই ব্যবস্থার দরুন অন্য প্রতিষ্ঠান থেকে বেশি নম্বর পাওয়া অনেক ছাত্রছাত্রীই এই সংস্থায় ভর্তি হতে পারেন না। এই তথ্য সরকারকে আরও অস্থিত্তিতে ফেলে।

সাহায্যপ্রাপ্ত সংস্থায় সংরক্ষণের কথা বলা হচ্ছে। বেসরকারি সংস্থায় কী হবে? সিপিআইয়ের এ বি বর্ধনও তাঁদের সাপে যোগ দেন। বিভিন্ন দলের পক্ষ থেকে সরকারকে বলা হয়, আর কিছু দিনের মধ্যেই উচ্চ শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলিতে নতুন শিক্ষাবর্ষ চালু হয়ে যাবে। কাজেই এ বছর থেকে সংরক্ষণের ব্যবস্থা করা সম্ভব নয়। কিন্তু এটা যে করা হবে, তা স্পষ্ট ভাষায় ঘোষণা করতে আপত্তি কী? রামভদ্র দাবি তোলেন, সরকার এ জন্য অর্ডিন্যান্স জারি করুক। সকালে এই অবস্থায় বৈঠক হুগুত রাখা হয়। সন্ধ্যায় ফের শুরু হয় আলোচনা। যার পরিণতি রাতের ঘোষণা।

বৈঠকের পরে প্রণববাবু সাংবাদিকদের জানান, সময় বেঁচে সংরক্ষণ ও আসন বৃদ্ধির সিদ্ধান্ত কার্যকর করতে একটি কমিটি গঠন করা হবে। এ শিক্ষাপ্রতিষ্ঠানের উপাচার্য, ডিন ও ডিরেক্টররা তাঁদের মতামত জানাবেন। সব মিলিয়ে ৩১ অগস্টের মধ্যে একটি রিপোর্ট তৈরি করবে কেন্দ্র। এ দিনই সংরক্ষণ-বিতর্কে দু'ভাগ হয়ে গেল চিকিৎসকদের সংগঠন আইএমএ। সংগঠনটি প্রথম থেকেই সংরক্ষণ বিরোধী ধর্মঘটীদের পাশে

দাঁড়িয়েছে। কিন্তু আজ এই সংগঠন ভেঙে জন্ম নিল অন্য একটি সংগঠন ইন্ডিয়ান ন্যাশনাল মেডিক্যাল অ্যাসোসিয়েশন। নতুন এই সংগঠনের অভিযোগ, উচ্চবর্ণের চিকিৎসকরাই আইএমএ-র যাবতীয় ক্ষমতা কুক্ষিগত করে রেখেছে। তাঁরা সংরক্ষণ নীতিকে সমর্থন করার পাশাপাশি, ক্যাপিটেশন ফি দিয়ে ভর্তি হওয়া নিয়েও প্রম্ন তুলেছেন।

কিন্তু এ সব নিয়ে কোনও হেলদোল নেই ধর্মঘটী ছাত্রদের। এইমাসের ছাত্রদের অনশন আজ দশম দিনে পড়ল। সরকার তাঁদের দাবি মেনে সংরক্ষণ নীতির যৌক্তিকতা বিচার করতে একটি কমিটি গঠন করুক, আজও এই দাবিতে অনাড় ছাত্রেরা। জয়পুর-সহ বহু জায়গাতেই ছাত্রদের আন্দোলনের ফলে শিকের উঠেছে স্বাস্থ্য পরিষেবা। দিল্লির সরকারি হাসপাতালগুলিতে আজ ধর্মঘটী ডাক্তারদের ছাটাইয়ের নোটিস ধরিয়ে দেওয়া হয়। প্রায় ৭০০ ডাক্তারকে নোটিস দিয়ে বলা হয়েছে, ২৪ ঘণ্টার মধ্যে কাজে যোগ না দিলে তাঁদের চাকরি চলে যাবে। পাশাপাশি নতুন ডাক্তার নিয়োগের জন্য আজ বিজ্ঞাপনও দিয়েছে সরকার।

● জুনিয়ার ডাক্তারদের কর্মবিরতির ডাক... পৃঃ ৫

THURSDAY, MAY 25, 2006

A fair balance on reservations

In deciding to come up with a law in the monsoon session of Parliament to provide for 27 per cent reservations for Other Backward Classes in Central government educational institutions, the United Progressive Alliance government has gone by the consensus among all the major political parties. At the same time, by starting the scheme from the next academic year rather than rushing to implement it this year, it has bought itself enough time to work out the modalities and, more important, protect the interests of all sections by increasing the number of seats so that opportunities now available in the open competition will not be curtailed. In all, the decision represents a fair balance between affirmative action for the OBCs and safeguarding the interests of all sections. Right now in Central government educational institutions, around 77 per cent of the seats are open to competition and if the same numbers are to be retained after providing for the reservation of 27 per cent for the OBCs, the seats available will have to be increased to 154 per cent of the current levels. The assurance that the existing number of seats in the open competition will not be reduced should dispel the fears of the agitating doctors and students, and there is no real reason now for them to continue with the anti-reservation stir.

In seeking to implement the reservations scheme, the Government should bear in mind three imperatives. First, if the institutions are to take in additional numbers, it must get serious about strengthening their physical and academic infrastructure, including faculty, that would already seem to be under strain. The proposed Rs.7,800 crore one-time outlay over a period of three to five years and the Rs.2,200 crore expenditure to be incurred every year after the institutional expansion would be eminently worthwhile, and funds should not be hard to come by, given the buoyancy in revenues. Secondly, in the larger interests of the nation, some institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology and the Indian Institutes of Management need to be retained as islands of excellence, their entrance standards uncompromised even by socially desirable goals. If these institutions are able to provide education of a quality that could match the standards anywhere in the world, it is largely because the intensely competitive admission processes bring in students of the highest calibre. There may be debates over the right way of testing "merit", but in an educational institution any move away from an assessment of academic attainment and academic potential towards non-academic criteria would inevitably compromise standards. Thirdly, there is the danger that, as has happened too often in the States, affirmative action would be seen as having been completed with the institution of quotas at the university stage. The task of strengthening the public school system that caters to the socially and educationally disadvantaged, as well as special enrichment programmes that would level the field are equally important and brook no delay.

25 MAY 2006

THE HINDU

President's appeal to medicos

Staff Reporter

Handwritten: 9-11-75, Kapil Mishra

NEW DELHI: President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam on Wednesday appealed to students protesting against reservation in institutions of higher education to call off their hunger strike. He assured them that the interests of all sections of the student community would be taken care of by the Government. Dr. Kalam told a delega-

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tion of students, which met him under the aegis of Youth for Justice (YFJ), that their parents had pinned lots of hopes on them to fulfil their educational pursuits and that they should realise that every life was precious.

The President explained to the students that the Government had decided to bring in the legislation during the monsoon session of Parliament only after

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considerable deliberations. He also reminded them that the Government would constitute an Oversight Committee that will draw up a time-bound road map for increasing the number of seats in institutions of higher education and submit its report by August 1.

Talking to reporters later, YFJ convenor Kapil Mishra said: "We demanded a white paper

from the Government on how reservation has benefited the poor and which castes have been able to come up on the social ladder with reservation. We also demanded setting up of an apolitical commission of experts to look into the entire issue of reservation and its relevance. ... We don't accept the recommendations and suggestions of the Group of Ministers."

25 MAR 2005

THE HINDU

আয় ভাই টানিয়া নামাই

শেষ পর্যন্ত কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার উচ্চ শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানে অন্যান্য অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির জন্য ২৭ শতাংশ আসন সংরক্ষিত রাখার সিদ্ধান্তই গ্রহণ করিল। বলা যায়, সরকারের দ্বিতীয় বর্ষপূর্তিতে ইহাই জাতিকে মনমোহন সিংহের উপহার। এমনটা যে ঘটিতে চলিয়াছে, তাহার ইঙ্গিত কেন্দ্রীয় মানবসম্পদ উন্নয়ন মন্ত্রী অর্জুন সিংহের অনমনীয় জেদ হইতেই বুঝা যাইতেছিল। যে-ভাবে সংরক্ষণ-বিরোধী আন্দোলনে অংশগ্রহণকারী মেডিক্যাল ও ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ছাত্রছাত্রীদের পুনর্বিবেচনার অনুরোধ উপেক্ষা করিয়া তিনি সরকারকে সংরক্ষণ প্রশ্নে আপন 'সাংবিধানিক দায়' পালনের কথা বারংবার স্মরণ করাইতেছিলেন, তাহাতেও ঘটনার গতি স্পষ্ট হইয়া যায়। সত্য, এই মর্মে একটি সাংবিধানিক সংশোধনী সর্বদলীয় ঐকমত্যে ইতিপূর্বেই মঞ্জুর হইয়াছে। কিন্তু সেই সংশোধনী রূপায়ণের কোনও সময়সীমা ধার্য ছিল না। অর্থাৎ অর্জুন সিংহ ক্রমাগত তাঁহার মন্ত্রকের তরফে নীতি প্রণয়ন করিয়া সরকারকে এমন চাপে ফেলিয়া দেন, যে সরকারের পক্ষে যদি বা কিছু দ্বিধা থাকিয়া থাকে, তাহাও নস্যাৎ হইয়া যায়। শাসক গোষ্ঠীর দক্ষিণী শরিক এবং বামপন্থী সমর্থকরাও অনগ্রসরদের জন্য সংরক্ষণে চাপ দেওয়ায় আগামী বৎসর হইতেই মেডিক্যাল, ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ও ম্যানেজমেন্ট শিক্ষার সরকারি কেন্দ্রগুলিতে তাহা চালু করিবার সিদ্ধান্ত হইয়াছে।

সিদ্ধান্তটি দুর্ভাগ্যজনক, কেননা ইহা উচ্চ শিক্ষার মতো মেধা, দক্ষতা, সৃষ্টিশীলতা ও প্রতিযোগিতার ক্ষেত্রে কোটার মাধ্যমে সম্বুচিত করিয়া দিবে। মেধা নয়, জাতি-পরিচয়ই হইবে উচ্চ শিক্ষার অর্ধেক আসনে ভর্তির সুযোগ পাওয়ার ছাড়পত্র। সরকার বলিবার চেষ্টা করিয়াছে, মেধাভিত্তিক ভর্তির সুযোগ যাহাতে আগের মতোই থাকে, সে জন্য আসনসংখ্যা বাড়ানো হইবে। কিন্তু এই খিড়কিদুয়ার বন্দোবস্তের প্রতিশ্রুতি কোনও সাঙ্খ্য না। কারণ প্রথমত, অধিকাংশ উচ্চ শিক্ষার প্রতিষ্ঠানেই আসনবৃদ্ধির উপযোগী পরিকাঠামো নাই। দ্বিতীয়ত, আসনসংখ্যা বৃদ্ধি করিয়াও পঠনপাঠন ও প্রশিক্ষণের মান আগের মতো সমুচ্চ রাখার নিশ্চয়তা আরওই নাই। পরিমাণগত বৃদ্ধি উৎকর্ষ হ্রাস করিতে বাধ্য। তৃতীয়ত, এ জন্য বাড়তি আট হাজার কোটি টাকার অর্থসংস্থানের কথা বলা হইতেছে। এই বিপুল অর্থের সংস্থান হইলেও তা সরকারের অগ্রাধিকার হওয়া উচিত সেই অর্থ প্রাথমিক বা মাধ্যমিক শিক্ষার উন্নয়নে ব্যয় করা। শিক্ষার এই ক্ষেত্রগুলি এতই উপেক্ষিত ও অবহেলিত যে সরকারের পক্ষে এই দিকটিতে মনোনিবেশ করাই বাঞ্ছনীয়। চতুর্থত, সংরক্ষিত শ্রেণিগুলির মধ্য হইতে যোগ্য প্রার্থী না পাওয়ায় যেমন সরকারি চাকুরির কোটা শূন্য পড়িয়া থাকিতেছে, তেমনই উচ্চ শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানের কোটাও অপূর্ণ থাকিয়া যাইতে পারে। ইতিমধ্যেই সংরক্ষিত শ্রেণির যে সব প্রার্থী মেডিক্যাল, ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বা ম্যানেজমেন্টের মতো উচ্চ শিক্ষাক্রমে ভর্তি হইয়াছেন, সমীক্ষায় দেখা যাইতেছে, তাহারা যথেষ্ট সাফল্য অর্জন ব্যর্থ। সামাজিক ন্যায়বিচারের নামে এ ভাবেই শাসক গোষ্ঠী সংরক্ষণকে একটি রাজনৈতিক প্রতীকে পরিণত করিতেছে।

সামাজিক ন্যায়বিচারের কণ্টকিত প্রশ্নেও তফশিলি জাতি-জনজাতির সঙ্গে অন্যান্য অনগ্রসর শ্রেণিকে এক করিয়া ফেলার মধ্যে রাজনৈতিক সুবিধাবাদ আছে। সমাজে দলিত-অন্ত্যজের স্থান আর অনগ্রসরদের স্থান এক নয়। মণ্ডলায়নের মাধ্যমে অনগ্রসরদের যে ক্ষমতায়ন ঘটিয়াছে, তাহার ফলে বহু ক্ষেত্রে অনগ্রসরদের নিজস্ব দল আজ শাসকের ভূমিকায় (উত্তরপ্রদেশ ও বিহার)। এই সব রাজ্যে তফশিলি জাতি-উপজাতির সামাজিক পীড়ক হিসাবে অনগ্রসররাই সামনের সারিতে। উচ্চ শিক্ষার সরকারি প্রতিষ্ঠানের ২৭ শতাংশ আসন অনগ্রসরদের জন্য সংরক্ষিত করা জনসংখ্যার অনুপাতকে প্রতিফলিত করিতে পারে, কিন্তু সামাজিক ন্যায়ের সূচক তাহা কোনও মতেই হইবে না। কংগ্রেস হিন্দি বলয় হইতে কার্যত বিভাঙিত হইয়াছে, দলিত ও অনগ্রসররা নিজস্ব সংগঠন গড়িয়া রাজনৈতিক দরকষাকষি মারফত শাসনক্ষমতা হাসিল করায় এবং উচ্চবর্ণীয়রা বিজেপির ছত্রছায়ায় সমাবেশিত হওয়ায় সংরক্ষণের হাত ধরিয়া দল হয়তো হাত প্রভাব কতকটা পুনরুদ্ধার করিতে চায়। এই রাজনৈতিক বাধ্যবাধকতা ছাড়া উচ্চ শিক্ষায় সংরক্ষণ চালু করার কোনও যুক্তিই নাই। ইহাতে উচ্চ শিক্ষার মান যেমন বিস্ময়িত প্রতিযোগিতার আধুনিক চাহিদার উপযোগী হইবে না, তেমনই শেষ বিচারে সংরক্ষিত শ্রেণিগুলিও আদৌ উপকৃত হইবে না। নিম্নবর্ণীয়কে উপরে তোলার নামে সরকার আসলে জাতির মেধাসম্পদকেই টানিয়া নামাইতে বদ্ধপরিকর।

Destabilisation by quotas

Author's favour
5/15
25/5

The government's move to introduce an extended reservation system in businesses and educational institutions will stifle economic growth and marginalise India in the global community, writes BC DUTTA

TERRORISTS have been active in different regions of India for a long time. It is commonly believed - and perhaps rightly so - that our neighbour Pakistan, with the help of its spy wing, ISI, is perpetrating terrorist activities in our country.

Many Pakistanis who come to India on visitor visas do not go back and are reported missing. Their unauthorised stay in India evokes suspicion. They also help the Pakistan-sponsored terrorists with their agenda of violence to destabilise India. Our security forces are trying their best to contain the terrorist activities, but unfortunately, such violent acts have continued unabated. More often than not, the administration is prevented from paying full attention to these issues, thanks to internal turmoil and death and despair caused by natural calamities. For several years after the 1998 Pokhran blasts, India had to face economic sanctions imposed by the developed countries as they could not accept the idea of India becoming a nuclear power.

Despite all odds, India has been able to carry on its economic growth activities and has also been recognised worldwide as an emerging authority. The country is also on the way to becoming a nuclear power. It has found its place among the 10 high-ranking global economic powers. But it needs to be noted that behind such phenomenal growth are our world-class technologists, engineers, economists and others. They are the products of our institutions of excellence, the



Indian Institutes of Technology, the Indian Institutes of Management, and so on. These institutions produce leaders, not workers who will carry out orders. These institutions' policy is to pick the best so that they can be groomed to become the best in their respective fields. They follow a merit-based induction system. History says that even the Mughals followed this policy - they did not hesitate to choose Rajputs who belonged to a different religion as their Army commanders.

Reservation may be socially desirable but it is not conducive for creating leaders. We should not fail to understand that primary education is our right. But higher education must be achieved. Eminent persons like Ramanujam, Sir JC Bose, Dr Homi J Bhabha, President APJ Abdul Kalam and others are achievers. Since the world is becoming increasingly competitive, reservation is a retro-

grade step.

The ruling Congress and its allies are determined to introduce an extended quota system to allow students of socially disadvantaged groups to get admission in these institutions of excellence, not on the basis of merit but on the strength of quotas. But other students will, of course, be inducted on the basis of merit. These institutions will thus have a strange admixture of the deserving and undeserving. This is likely to depress the institutions' standards of excellence. Our institutes will then hardly be able to turn out the adequate number of technologists, engineers, doctors, scientists and other professionals needed to maintain the tempo of economic growth of the country. This will eventually lead to our economic destabilisation.

It is because of our private sector that India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world.

The laissez-faire policy of allowing private businesses to grow without government interference has contributed to the private sector's success. The present government's move to dictate employment policies through reservation in the private sector will not only stifle its growth potential, but also violate its fundamental right to occupation, trade and commerce under Article 19(g) of the Constitution.

To achieve success, business needs the freedom to recruit workers who best suit its requirements. But the ruling Congress and its allies are determined to enforce extended reservations in the private sector and compel it to recruit persons from the underprivileged groups. The recruitment of such workers will not be based on merit or skills that fit the requirements of the business concerned but on quotas and its results will be far-reaching. Once the

quota system is imposed, businesses in the private sector will not be able to recruit workers according to their requirements. Workers inducted on the basis of quotas may not be efficient and productive. This will lead to escalation in the cost of production. The private sector's competitive edge will be lost. Since high-cost produce cannot be sold in the competitive world market, India's exports will go down. And this will contribute to India's economic destabilisation.

Terrorists who are out to destabilise India are condemned as the country's enemies. But our quota-wielding parties, in an attempt to remain in power, are out to appease a section of our population by imposing reservations for them in our institutions of excellence and in the private sector. They are thereby trying to destabilise our economic strength. There seems to be no difference between the action of the terrorists and that of our quota-wielding ruling parties. We must condemn these political parties as we do the terrorists and not treat them as India's benefactors. If we fail to stop our political leaders from imposing extended reservations on our institutions of excellence and on the booming private sector, the process of relegation of India to a lower level cannot be avoided. The status of our country will be marginalised in the global assembly of nations despite our dislike for such an eventuality.

(The author is a retired Indian Revenue Service official.)

Quota protesters fire without gun

9.1 25/5

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, May 24: Striking medical students today scrambled to intensify their agitation against quotas without any clear-cut plan of action as it began to dawn on them that their campaign needed better coordination and more public support.

Students and resident doctors said the "first step" towards intensifying the protest was in urging senior faculty, nurses and staff in medical colleges in Delhi to join the strike and cripple hospitals.

The faculty at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences has decided to go on what is being dubbed a "token mass casual leave". The faculty will officially be on leave, but will continue to look after patients.

The students have also called for "civil disobedience" movement by professionals and traders tomorrow. They have appealed to traders, resident welfare associations, bank employees and bar associations not to work from 9 am to 12 noon tomorrow.

Stunned by the government's decision last night to push through the OBC quota, the immediate response of the students revolved around

such token gestures and voluntary action. In Calcutta, roads were blocked.

With no political leader willing to lend open support, the students called on President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, who asked them "to come out of their fasting mode and resume normal student life". The President tried to pacify them by pointing out that the number of seats would be increased.

The students, however, stuck to their demand that a separate empowered commission be set up to examine the quota policy.

The campaign needs "leaders who could take this forward... crystallise the movement," said Dr Binod Khaitan, the associate professor of dermatology and the vice-president of the AIIMS faculty association.

"The apolitical nature of this movement is its strength and its weakness. Coordination and logistics are sometimes weak.

"But this agitation appears set to continue," Khaitan said tonight during a candle-light walk around the lawn where dozens of strikers lay sprawled in the evening heat.

"There's a mood of anger and betrayal," said Anirudh Lochan, a resident doctor at the University College of Med-

ical Sciences in New Delhi and a member of the Youth For Equality, the organisation that has steered the agitation. "We have had voices of moderation and voices of extremism among us, and the voices of extremism are likely to gain a greater say now."

Lochan added: "It's hard to do this. We all want to go back to work. But why did the government make this stupid announcement at a time when they were talking to us?"

It is still unclear how much support the striking students will get from within the medical community. The Indian Medical Association, which had issued a statement opposing caste-based reservations in educational institutions last month, has now said it is up to individual branches of the IMA to decide the nature of the anti-quota campaign.

At one point, some IMA officials had hinted that they would call an all-India medical bandh on May 25. But officials today said local branches of IMA have been asked to chalk out their own programmes.

"We don't want this agitation to be associated exclusively with doctors," said Dr Narendar Saini, the honorary joint secretary of the IMA in New Delhi.

■ See Page 6, Metro



A student of hunger strike at AIIMS reads *Wings of Fire* written by President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam who the protesters met on Wednesday. (AFP)

Arjun's team gets cracking

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, May 24: Arjun Singh's ministry has set the ball rolling on introducing 27 per cent quota for Other Backward Classes in higher education.

The human resource ministry has sent a note to the Prime Minister, informing him that "work" has begun on the reservation project.

The ministry's first job is to draw up for the monsoon session a bill that will enable the government to implement the quota.

Another crucial task before the government is to pick the members of the oversight committee, which will suggest the nitty-gritty of enforcing the quota and increasing the number of seats in the general category.

Arjun's ministry will suggest names for the panel but the Prime Minister will have the last word, sources said. It

will draw on suggestions of directors, deans and vice-chancellors. Their inputs will be used to outline the specific measures needed for each class of institute.

The bill will say OBCs will be given a 27 per cent quota, but the sheer challenges in raising the number of seats within a year to offset the impact on the general category may prompt the government to consider a middle path.

The seat increase could cost over Rs 8,000 crore. If the government increases the seats to compensate those set aside for the quota, 27 seats have to be added for every 100 seats in a central institute. In the six IIMs alone, this could mean an increase of over 300 seats. For the IITs and others, it will be far higher.

The group that will advise the panel may suggest that a phased implementation would be more realistic, though such a proposal drew the ire of some MPs yesterday.

25 MAY 2006

Ministry confident but doubts remain

50% seat rise aim in a year

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

Arjun twist

New Delhi, May 25: The human resource development ministry is giving the impression that the monumental task of raising the number seats in higher educational institutions by over 50 per cent to meet the government's quota obligations can be completed before the academic session beginning June 2007.

According to the announcement made on Tuesday by the government, the 27 per cent quota for other backward classes (OBC) in central institutions will take hold from June 2007. It also made a commitment to increase the number of seats to address the concerns of general-category students who have been protesting for almost two weeks.

The ministry, therefore, is working on the assumption that the current number of seats available to general students does not shrink once the quota kicks in.

If in an institution there are now 100 seats, 77.5 are for general students and 22.5 for SC/ST categories. With the 27 per cent quota being introduced, the reserved portion of seats will increase to almost half of the total. In order to still make 77.5 seats available to general students, the total number of seats will have to go up to 154.



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh says one thing, HRD minister Arjun Singh says another:

In Srinagar, Manmohan said: "The government will find a viable and credible way to protect the interest of all sections of society."

This seems to suggest an increase in the number of seats along with introduction of the quota.

Arjun doesn't think so. He said in a TV interview: "There is no relation between reservation and increasing number of seats."

"We have made a commitment that the interests of all sections of students will be taken care of," said a ministry official.

How the institutions and universities do this — what formula they adopt — is still to be worked out. "Things will start moving after the oversight committee is constituted," said the official.

The government will set up this committee to see through implementation of the quota. The committee and the institute heads who will be involved

in the process will have the freedom to work out the modalities of introducing the policy and may not necessarily agree with the ministry proposal.

HRD minister Arjun Singh said the ministry's final proposal would be sent to the cabinet in 10 days.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh made it clear at a news conference in Srinagar today that there was no question of a review. "I think the matter is already settled," he said. "I am pained to see the agonising experience the youth of the country are undergoing. They should call off their strike."

"I am not averse to meeting any group of our citizens, if they want to talk to me."

The students and junior doctors have threatened to step up their agitation.

Despite the ministry's bravado, it's not clear how seats can be increased by over 50 per cent in just a year. The IITs have been increasing the number of seats at the rate of 15-20 per cent a year.

IIM Calcutta has a target of raising the number of seats to 400 in 2008 from 335 in the academic session starting next month. Together, the IIMs have 1,600 seats which will need to be raised to nearly 2500.

The Centre has assured an additional Rs 9,000 crore for the extra seats and infrastructure. "Funds are not a problem," said a ministry official.

■ See Page 8

26 MAY 2006

THE TELEGRAPH

Strike cripples medical services

OPD services worst hit; engineering students join stir in Haryana

Special Correspondent

CHANDIGARH: Medical services continued to be paralysed in Chandigarh and Haryana on Thursday as the medical fraternity, including Government and private doctors, medical students and chemists observed a near-total bandh on a call issued by the Indian Medical Association (IMA) in protest against the Centre's "reservation" policy.

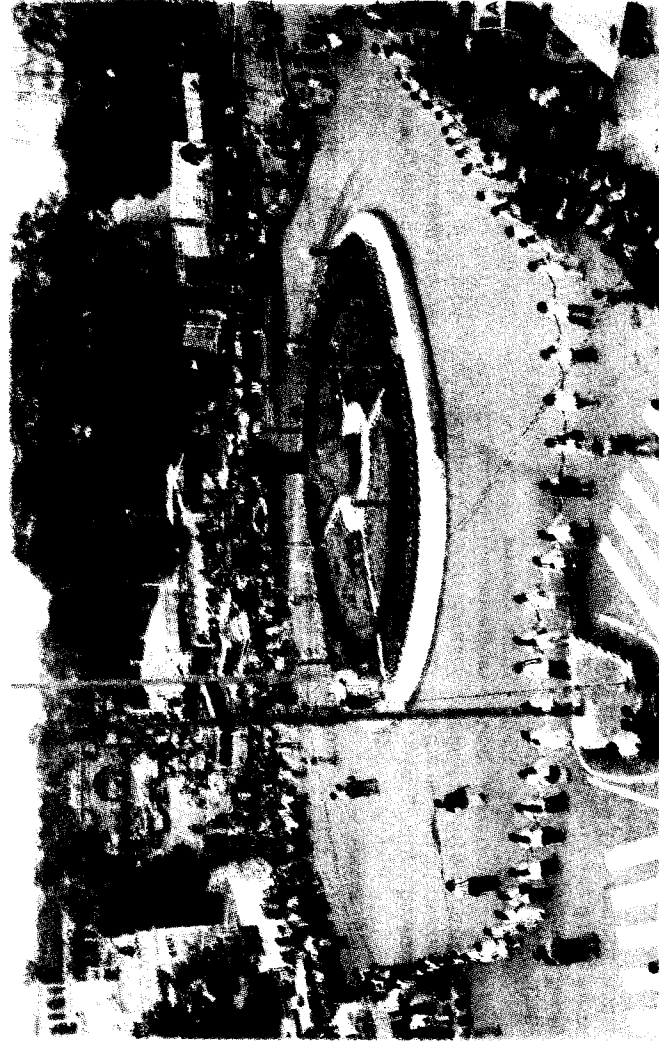
OPD services were the worst hit and the patients had a harrowing time as even some private hospitals, nursing homes and private clinics also joined the bandh.

Emergency services

However, the emergency services in the PGI and Government Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) continued to be manned by the senior consultants.

The ongoing agitation by the PGI resident doctors and GMCH medical students against the proposed 27 per cent reservation for the OBCs in higher education and medical education institutions received a shot in the arm with private doctors, chemists and students of the Punjab Engineering College and Panjab University participating in a procession.

According to reports reaching the State headquarters, medical services were also crippled in towns like Rohtak, Yamunana-



STIR GOES ON: Junior doctors forming a human chain at the GAD crossing in Bhopal on Thursday over the Government's reservation policy. —PHOTO: A.M. FARUQUI

gar, Ambala and Karnal.

Arjun effigy burnt

Staff Correspondent adds from Dehra Dun: Most private nursing homes and clinics in Uttaranchal remained closed on Thursday in response to the IMA strike call.

In Dehra Dun, doctors staged a rally and burnt an effigy of Union Minister Arjun Singh and submitted a memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister to

the District Magistrate.

Similar reports have come in from Hardwar, Udham Singh Nagar, Naini Tal, Pithoragarh and Almora. The strike call had no impact in the rest of the State as there are hardly any private practitioners in the higher hill regions.

Describing the reservation move as a political stunt to garner votes by the Congress, the State president of the Ayurveda Sammelan, G. B. Joshi, said that

no one was against reservation but the way higher education was being diluted through quotas was a sad thing to happen in India. "The Government should instead evolve a formula to provide reservation to meritorious poor students," added Dr. Joshi. His views were supported by many medical students and homeopathic doctors.

IMA State secretary D. D. Chowdhary said that reservation on caste lines was unacceptable

in the interests of the nation as everyone hoped to be treated by a good doctor and not someone who had got into the profession by virtue of quotas.

Massive rally in Shimla

Staff Correspondent adds from Shimla: A number of business associations in Himachal Pradesh including the Beopar Mandal observed a half-day "bandh" in various cities and towns in support of the striking anti-reservation medicos.

Slogan-shouting doctors took out a massive rally here in Shimla. A number of representatives of the Bar Council, Himachal Pradesh University, Anti-Quota State and Central Government Employees' Front, Ayurvedic and Veterinary Colleges, Chemists' Association, Resident Doctors' Association and teachers from the premier Indira Gandhi Medical College and State Hospital addressed the gathering.

The speakers criticised politicians of all hues including former Prime Minister V. P. Singh and Union Human Resource Minister Arjun Singh.

To contest polls

PTI adds from Ludhiana: Irked over not getting any support from ruling Congress over the anti-reservation row, striking medicos on Thursday decided to jump into an election fray and declared that they will contest the forthcoming Punjab elections to air their grievances.

Yashwanth Singh 5/6/68

The reservation debate: missing components

The benefits from reservation that might and do accrue to society as a whole are rarely mentioned.

V.K. Natraj

IN THE present debate on reservation for the Other Backward Classes, some components highly relevant to the issue are conspicuous by their absence. A feature common to all discussion on positive discrimination in India, independent of the view taken on it, is that its focus is restricted to only one dimension of reservation. The benefits emanating from the policy of reservation are seen only through the perspective of the direct beneficiary. The benefits that might and do accrue to society as a whole are rarely mentioned. In contrast, in the United States there is a marked emphasis on the contribution affirmative action makes to diversity in academia as well as in the workplace.

In fact, in a landmark case involving the University of Michigan, the U.S. Supreme Court once again came down against a "formulaic approach," which adds a booster to ethnic minorities and other groups identified for affirmative action. But where the policy was not formulaic and likely to result in diversity it was upheld. This also explains why some retired generals of the U.S. Army filed *amicus curae* briefs supporting affirmative action. They did so on grounds of the importance of diversity.

In one of two cases involving the University of Michigan, the majority judgment of the Supreme Court upheld the use of race as one of many factors in selecting students because it furthers "a compelling interest in obtaining the educational benefits that flow from a diverse student body" (Justice Sandra Day O'Connor for the majority). Another significant observation is: "In order to cultivate a set of leaders with legitimacy in the eyes of the citizens it is necessary that the path to leadership be visibly open to talented and qualified individuals of every race and ethnicity."

However, even firm supporters of affirmative action do not countenance quotas and are generally disapproving of any policy that may adversely affect merit. In India, the beneficial consequences of diversity are rarely considered. Many from fortunate backgrounds would gain in social sensitivity from studying and working in a background of "diversity."

I am reminded of a young Indian student studying in the U.S. who said in all innocence that he "discovered" caste only in America and not while he was a student in Delhi. Not unsurprisingly it turned out that all his education had been in elite schools and colleges! The single-minded concentration on reservation as assisting only the direct beneficiary should stop. It is time we assessed them from a wider perspective. This unicolor perspective is the result of regarding positive discrimination as a concession to the backward classes rather than as their right and a social necessity.

A second missing component from the discussion is pervasive lack of attention to what reservation has achieved in India. While we suffer from absence of or limited data, there can be no doubt that the portals of higher education have opened out to accommodate pupils from the backward sections. Anyone who is familiar with the higher education scene, especially in State universities, and colleges in smaller cities and district

towns, will know the truth of this even without recourse to data. It may be less applicable to 'metropolitan universities' and elite colleges.

A related point too does not get noticed. And this has a vital nexus with the aim of positive discrimination. Fundamentally, reservation is expected to be a self-liquidating mechanism, that is to say, the basic objective is to empower educationally those hailing from disadvantaged backgrounds so that over a period of time fewer groups would require discrimination in their favour. It would be instructive to find out how many from castes entitled to reservation secure places in professional education in what is called the general merit or open category. My well-founded guess is that this proportion must be increasing. Incidentally, and contrary to popular misconception, places secured by 'reserved' candidates in the open pool cannot be counted against reserved seats. Governmental agencies should take steps to publish this data. That will be an effective answer to those who oppose reservation and regard it as being the chief villain in diluting merit.

A third missing element in our debate is the enormous contribution positive discrimination makes to inter-generational mobility. Quite often the children of beneficiaries would not be in need of reservation. This is an example of the creamy layer, which as A. Vaidyanathan has argued in these columns (May 18, 2006) should be skimmed off. But I might add that we need to factor in the necessity of ensuring that in this process the emergence of leadership in the backward classes is not impeded. Possibly the creamy layer has to be identified differentially rather than uniformly across castes.

I have refrained from drawing attention to inconsistencies in the stand of the anti-reservationists such as their silence on capitation fees since they are too obvious to require specific mention. However, one other issue has to be discussed briefly. The imbroglia on reservation has largely resulted from the 1950s onwards due to the difficulty in determining who constitute the OBCs. Further, some among them have become prominent actors in the political arena as a result of favourable electoral arithmetic. Therefore, even though the proposed reservation in elite institutions is defensible on many grounds, a great deal of caution is to be exercised in ensuring that the policy does not end up strengthening the already empowered. Also it would be futile to attempt a national list of OBCs since the local context including State policies influence 'backwardness'.

A final point I would like to touch upon is the plea made by virtually all participants in the debate to the necessity of improving school education. While there can be no dispute about this, can society and the state expect the backward classes to wait for that day to dawn. The message is clear, in arriving at a blend of equity and excellence, there is bound to be some trade-off. It would be advisable for us to admit this and be prepared for it instead of paying lip service to equity and in practice display benign indifference to it.

(The writer is a former Director of the Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai.)

27 MAY 2006

100

The BSP's amazing journey

That today sections of upper castes seem to prefer the BSP to the BJP speaks to the long distance travelled by Mayawati's party.

Vidya Subrahmaniam

FOR THE past month, medical students in the Capital have been protesting the "quota issue" with brooms and mops in their hands — in a crude symbolism against the Scheduled Castes. Were they to travel to Uttar Pradesh, they would discover how much behind the times they are. In her book, "Mere sangharshmai jeevan evam bahujan movement ka safarnama" (My struggle-filled life and the journey of bahujan movement), Mayawati explains how she reached out to Brahmins (and later other upper castes) and how the latter, in trickles to begin with but gradually in greater numbers, began to respond. The first step was to tap the more socially committed among Brahmins and through them appeal to the larger community. But lest this should be understood as a dilution of the Bahujan Samaj Party's opposition to "manuwad", there was a caveat. The BSP needed Brahmins — and other forward castes — to come over but on its terms: Those who responded, Ms. Mayawati let it be known, would be amply rewarded, by way of the party ticket, Rajya Sabha nominations, and ministerial berths.

The BSP chief's earliest breakthrough was the induction of Satish Chandra Misra, Advocate General in the BSP Government, who agreed to canvass support among like-minded Brahmins. Mr. Misra's positive feedback led to the appointment of coordinators tasked with organising district-level Brahmin mahasammelan (Brahmin congregations). The job was not easy. Forward castes in the north were not only more sizeable compared to the south, caste barriers were more entrenched in the absence of an enlightened social movement. The BSP itself was deeply resented for its strident anti-manuwadi campaign.

But mission "Brahmin jodo" (integrate Brahmins) was the worth the time and effort, and on June 9, 2005, Ms. Mayawati addressed the BSP's first State-level Brahmin mahasammelan. "It is not by chance that you have turned up here in such large numbers here," the BSP chief told the gathering. Her repeated assurance: the BSP was against "manuwad", or the Brahminical disdain for lower castes, but it was not against Brahmins. Therefore, any fear of a reverse discrimination in the BSP was unfounded. The Brahmin mahasammelan spawned other mahasammelan — of Rajputs, Vaishyas, and Yadavas, representing forward and backward castes. Each was an attempt to add another community to the BSP's Dalit core vote.

The enormity of the BSP's forward caste project is best understood in terms of the BSP-BJP relationship. Each time the BSP aligned with the BJP, the former gained and the latter lost. Between 1994 and 2004, the BJP's Lok Sabha seats from Uttar Pradesh declined from 51 of 84 seats to 10 of 80 seats. Between 1991 and 2002, its Assembly seats declined from 221 of 425 seats to 88 of 403 seats. In the same period, the BSP's Lok Sabha tally went up from just one to 19 and its Assembly seats from 12 to 98. There seemed but one explanation for this dramatic reversal: the BJP's core voters were disillusioned by its repeated pacts with the forward caste-baiting BSP. That the same segments, or even a section of them, could prefer the BSP to the BJP speaks to the amazing journey of a party that targeted, and was in turn targeted by, forward castes. As Sudhir Goyal, national spokesperson of the BSP puts it: "The transformation is a measure of our confidence. It is from a position of strength that we are talking to upper castes."

So, how do the BSP's Dalit workers react



UNLIKELY ALLIES: BSP president Mayawati at a Brahmin mahasammelan in Lucknow. To her right is Satish Chandra Misra, who is helping the BSP with its "Brahmin jodo" campaign. — PHOTO: SUBIR ROY.

to the co-option of the "manuwadi" castes? With stoic acceptance: "Our fight is with the system. This is the only way the BSP can capture power on its own." Undoubtedly, this is the voice of a deeply committed cadre. On the outside, the BSP is all about Ms. Mayawati, with the media obsessively focussing on her clothes, jewellery, and "impeccable" manner. On the ground, the BSP could be a cult instead of a party, with the cadre doggedly and silently propagating the party's ideology in the remotest villages. The commonest refrain among workers is "hum marne mitne ke liye taiyar hain" (we are ready to die for the party). For Salim Ansari and Raj Vijay, former and current presidents of the party's Mau unit, the BSP is a mission where the poorest workers give up bidis and paan to raise funds. The election drill is rigorous and starts early, with party candidates chosen almost two years in advance and put on test. Each constituency is divided into 25 sectors with ten polling booths to a sector. Each booth, accounting roughly for 1000 voters, is under the care of a nine-member committee, headed by a president and with at least one woman member deputed to motivate and mobilise women voters.

Says Mr. Ansari, "Behenji's one message is: do not sleep. And we do not. The booth committees have a single goal — to ensure the maximum turnout of our voters. Each member has a specific duty, and we have already had rehearsals for what to do on voting day [eight months away]." So has the BSP really put together an unbeatable Dalit-forward caste-most backward caste combination? The many caste mahasammelan and the systematic targeting of the smaller caste groups — Chauhan, Rajbar, Malla,

Maurya to name a few — would suggest so. Say BSP workers Ashok Kumkar and M.S. Chauhan: "As important as the Brahmin mahasammelan are the many more unpublicised efforts directed at the smaller castes."

Yet the experiment is not without its pitfalls. For instance, the pro-Mayawati mood, so visible among Allahabad forward castes, seemed driven less by a genuine change of heart towards the BSP than by the immediate imperative of removing Mulayam Singh. The language bordered on communal, with Mr. Mulayam Singh accused of "pandering to Muslims" and "protecting Muslims bullies." This leads to the question: Is forward caste support for the BSP merely opportunistic, with the BSP temporarily substituting for the BJP?

As important is a second question: Has the BSP been able to break traditional barriers in the villages? This writer travelled into the villages of Mau with a band of BSP workers. The Dalit villagers were easily identified by their enthusiasm and shouts of "Jai Bhim" (for Bhim Rao Ambedkar). The fervours made it impossible to tell between voters and workers. Both spoke of "working to the last breath" for the BSP and *behenji*. Bright-eyed Ranjana from Nausopur village typified this mix. "There is a BSP wave. The Brahmins are voting the *haathi* (elephant)," she gushed, even as she insisted on accompanying us to forward caste homes to "witness the revolution."

Ashok Kumar, the village pradhan, was emphatic that Brahmins would vote the BSP: "I have complete respect for Mayawati as an administrator. She was tough on criminals and that is what we need now." Banke Bihari, another Brahmin, voted the BJP in 2002 and wants to give the BSP a try: "I

would like to believe that she has changed." But were forward castes not jailed and harassed by previous BSP regimes? "Those who ought to be jailed, ought to be jailed." Ram Ashish Tiwari was bitter about the BJP's forgotten Ram mandir and the "Jinnah betrayal." "I do not know if I will vote the BSP. But I am not voting the BJP."

Yet attitudinal mindsets are not so easily demolished. At Umapur, our group ran into the openly hostile Rajnath Tiwari and his son. Said Mr. Tiwari: "The Ram mandir will be built and we will vote the BJP as long as we live." But were Brahmins not turning to the BSP? The son's hands flew to his ears, his disgust apparent, his words a torrent of abuse: "Ram, Ram, what are you saying? The BSP and us?" The effect was instantaneous. "Don't you dare," began Ranjana only to stop abruptly, her eyes misty, her fists clenched tightly. It was evident that she was holding herself back. Did she not want to retaliate? "I do but we have a larger goal. We have to win."

That the BSP has gained phenomenally on the ground is clear. But U.P. is a complex State where every day brings a new challenge. In the villages, each major caste has its own political party and the numbers can only increase as election day draws near. The Samajwadi Party's Muslim base is under threat from a new, more strident Muslim party. This could benefit the BSP or it could breathe life into the BJP. If the Congress revival is better than currently anticipated, it could affect forward caste movement towards the BSP. On the other hand, should the anti-quota forward caste anger spread to U.P. — currently reservation is a non-issue here — the Congress will be affected the most.

Medicos meet Manmohan

2
C. S. Singh
K. S. Singh
20/5

Decide to continue agitation

Aarti Dhar

NEW DELHI: Medical students, protesting against the proposed 27 per cent reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in higher educational institutions, decided to continue their strike on Friday, despite an assurance from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yet again that the road map for quota implementation would address all students, and that they need not be worried about shrinking educational opportunities.

Dr. Singh gave the assurance to a delegation of students. He told them that he foresaw a massive expansion in the capacities of the higher education system, resulting in a huge growth in the educational opportunities for all classes and categories. Hence, they need not worry about shrinking educational opportunities, Media Advisor to the Prime Minister Sanjaya Baru told presspersons after the meeting.

The medicos, who had stopped work for the past 14 days, later held a meeting and decided to continue the strike.

Anand Mishra of the AIIMS Resident Doctors Association said the decision was taken at the general body meeting of the body after Dr. Singh's assurance. The students were to meet again later in the on Friday night.

"We had a positive response from the Prime Minister. He gave an assurance on all our demands," Jitender Singla, a member of the delegation, said.

The students have been de-

• **Huge growth in educational opportunities foreseen: Manmohan**

• **Government's roadmap addressed concerns of all students**

• **Students can give suggestions to technical expert groups**

manding the constitution of a judicial committee to review the reservation policy.

Dr. Singh emphasised that the road map laid down in the decision of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA)-Left coordination committee addressed the concerns of all categories of students, Mr. Baru said.

Government committed

The technical expert groups being set up under the Oversight Committee would examine the ways and means to expand the capacities, and the Government was committed to the expansion, Mr. Baru said. The students had been told that they could give their specific suggestions to these committees, he added.

At the meeting with Dr. Singh, the students laid down a charter of demands, which they wanted the Prime Minister and the Government to consider, and expressed their concern about the future of their fellow students.

Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh also met the Prime Minister on Friday.

THE HINDU

27 MAY 2005

YECHURY LASHES OUT 'Stir proves upper caste bias'

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI, May 26: The CPI-M today said continuance of the anti-quota agitation despite UPA's "balanced" approach on the reservation issue "clearly smacks of a blatant upper caste bias" that has been "ably assisted by a section of the media".

Besides bringing in the 93rd amendment to the Constitution to provide for 27 per cent reservation to OBCs, the UPA and the Left parties had earlier this week decided to "expand facilities in all educational institutions under the Central government to ensure that there is no reduction in the seats available under the general category," Politburo member Mr Sitaram Yechury said in an editorial in coming issue of CPI-M organ "People's Democracy".

"If this (anti-reservation) strike is continuing, then, clearly, its objective is not a protest against the potential decrease in the seats for the general category but its aim seems to be to oppose reservations altogether," he said. After going along with UPA at the Centre on reser-

vation for OBCs in central educational institutions, Mr Yechury asked the government to allay the apprehensions of general category students that their prospects would not be affected by the proposed legislation.

"The fears that such reservations will adversely affect the prospect of general category students must be allayed with the expansion of facilities," he said.

Stressing the need to "balance the objectives of the eternal triangle of Indian education - quality, quantity and equity", Mr Yechury said in the present circumstances, this move of the UPA government to implement Parliament's decision, which reflected a rare unanimity among all political parties, was the "only way to move towards achieving such a balance".

Alleging that protests were being organised in some parts of the country by private companies and even professional event managers, he said this "strengthens the suspicion of a vehement upper-caste motivation to oppose reservations altogether".

27 MAY 2008

THE STATESMAN

IIT students add muscle to stir

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, May 27. — The anti-reservation protests in West Bengal acquired a sharper edge today with students from the IIT, Kharagpur joining the striking medicos in a protest rally in Kolkata.

Nearly 7,000 students, from both technical and non-technical educational institutions, under the banner of *Youth for Equality West Bengal* chapter, took to the streets shouting anti-reservation slogans and holding placards condemning the Union HRD ministry's move to introduce OBC quota. The procession began from Calcutta Medical College and Hospital and culminated at Sahid Minar where a rally was held.

Apart from the representatives from IIT-Kharagpur, students from IISWBM, Bengal Engineering and Science University (BESU), National University for



The anti-quota rally in Kolkata. The Statesman

Juridical Sciences (NUJS), Ashutosh College, Ballygunge Science College, Dr R Ahmed Dental College, National Institute of Homoeopathy, Presidency College, St Xaviers College, Scottish Church College and Jadavpur University also participated in the rally.

Earlier in the day, a group of anti-quota medicos clashed with another section of junior doctors owing allegiance to the Students Federation of India (SFI) at Calcutta Medical College

and Hospital over the issue of suspension of work at the Outdoor Patients' Department (OPD). Trouble began when anti-quota protesters locked the OPD after some SFI-backed junior doctors tried to begin work.

An altercation ensued, which soon turned violent with both groups exchanging blows and prompting a huge contingent of police to rush to the spot. After the situation was brought under control and the SFI-

Stir to continue

NEW DELHI, May 27. — The anti-reservation medicos today decided to continue their two-week-old strike, saying there was no assurance from the government that the number of general category seats would not decrease with the implementation of the OBC reservations.

Details on page 6

backed doctors had left, the anti-quota protesters squatted in front of the OPD and also started a parallel OPD.

Mr Sitaram Yechury, CPI-M leader, urged the medicos to withdraw their stir. "The Centre has assured that the general seats won't be touched and new seats would be added for creation of a separate quota for the OBCs. The Centre has also agreed to increase seats for general quota students by 2007," he said.

28 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

28 MAY 2006

দিল্লি ও কটকে আত্মহত্যার চেষ্টা, ধর্মঘটে অনাড় ছাত্ররা

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি ও কলকাতা: আন্দোলন, বিক্ষোভ, ধর্মঘট— চলছিল সবই। তা সত্ত্বেও নিয়ন্ত্রণেই ছিল সংরক্ষণ বিরোধী আন্দোলন। কিন্তু শনিবার সন্ধ্যায় দিল্লির রামলীলা ময়দানে সংরক্ষণ বিরোধীদের বিক্ষোভ সমাবেশে ঢুকে, গায়ে আগুন লাগিয়ে পুরো ছবিটাই বদলে দিলেন ২৪ বছরের এক সাধারণ ফেরিওয়ালা ঋষিরঞ্জন গুপ্ত।

সংরক্ষণ বিরোধীদের ডাকে শনিবার বিকালে প্রয়াত প্রধানমন্ত্রী রাজীব গান্ধীর সমাধিস্থল বীরভূমি থেকে এক বিশাল মিছিল আসে রামলীলা ময়দানে। সমাবেশ চলাকালীনই কাণ্ডটা ঘটিয়ে ফেলেন ঋষি। সঙ্গে করে আনা কেবোসিন তেল গায়ে ঢেলে আগুন লাগিয়ে দেন তিনি। উপস্থিত পুলিশ ও সাধারণ মানুষ আগুন নিভিয়ে তাকে নিয়ে যান হাসপাতালে। পরে আত্মহত্যার চেষ্টার জন্য ঋষিরঞ্জনের বিরুদ্ধে আই পি এফেট থানায় এফ আই আর-ও দায়ের করা হয়। এরই মধ্যে খবর আসে, কটকে একজন সংরক্ষণ বিরোধী আন্দোলনকারী আত্মহত্যার চেষ্টা করেছেন। কিন্তু কে এই ঋষি? একজন ফেরিওয়ালা হয়ে কেনই বা তিনি গায়ে আগুন দিলেন? উত্তর জানেন না সংরক্ষণ বিরোধী আন্দোলনের কোনও নেতাই।

প্রশ্নটা এখানেই। আন্দোলন কি অন্য চেহারা নিতে চলেছে? শুক্রবার সংরক্ষণ বিরোধীদের প্রধানমন্ত্রী আসন কমানো হবে না বলে যে আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন, তার পরে অনেক বিক্ষোভকারীই শান্ত হয়েছেন। কিন্তু একাংশের দাবি, আসন কমানো নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে লিখিত আশ্বাস দিতে হবে। আন্দোলন থামবে না জানিয়ে তারা শনিবার দিল্লিতে সমাবেশও করেন। মিছিল শেষে তাঁরা জানান, ফের আলোচনায় বসে সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হবে আন্দোলনের পরবর্তী পদক্ষেপের। এ কথায় অনেকেই আশার আলো দেখেন। দু'সপ্তাহের কিছু বেশি সময় ধরে চলা আন্দোলন মিটিতে পারে ভেবে আশাবিভূত হন সেই সব রোগীর আত্মীয়েরাও, যারা এই আন্দোলনের ফলে সবচেয়ে বেশি ভুগেছেন। কিন্তু তারই মধ্যে এই ধরনের উগ্র আচরণ আন্দোলনের ভবিষ্যত নিয়ে প্রশ্ন তুলে দিয়েছে।

প্রশ্ন উঠছে, আন্দোলনের রাশ কি 'হুঁড়থ ফর ইকোয়ালিটি'র হাত থেকে বেরিয়ে যাবে? দিল্লির রামলীলা ময়দানে সংরক্ষণ বিরোধী সমাবেশে সেবে বিক্ষোভকারীরা পরবর্তী পদক্ষেপ ঠিক করতে বৈঠকে বসেন। শনিবারই কানপুর আইআইটি-র ছাত্রেরা সিদ্ধান্ত নেয়, রবিবার থেকে অনশনে

বসবেন তাঁরা। রাতের দিকে একই সিদ্ধান্ত নেন জেএনইউ, দিল্লি আইআইটি-র আন্দোলনকারীরাও। সব মিলিয়ে আন্দোলন মিটে যাওয়ার আশার ছবিটা হঠাৎই ফিকে হয়ে যায়।

হাসপাতালে নিয়ে যাওয়া হচ্ছে জখম ঋষি রঞ্জনের। - পিটিআই



সংরক্ষণ বিরোধী আন্দোলনের তেউয়ে ভোগান্তি বাড়ছে দেশব্যাপী সাধারণ মানুষের। সংরক্ষণ বিরোধীরা শনিবার ভোর রাতে হঠাৎই বন্ধ করে দেন কলকাতা মেডিক্যাল কলেজ হাসপাতালের সবক'টি বিভাগের আউটডোর। হাসপাতালের ৫ নম্বর গেটের মুখেই আউটডোরের তলাবন্ধ দরজার সামনে ভোর থেকেই চলতে থাকে সংরক্ষণ বিরোধীদের জমায়েত ও শ্লোগান। হাসপাতালের অধ্যক্ষ ইন্ড্রজিৎ রায় এবং সুপার অনুপ রায় রোগীদের দুর্দশার কথা বলে আউটডোর খোলার আবেদন জানালেও রাজি হননি আন্দোলনকারীরা। এ নিয়ে ঋশ্মেলাও বাধে। ধর্মঘটীদের এতটা অনড় মনোভাবে বিরক্ত বাম নেতারাও। কিন্তু মনমোহন সরকার ছাত্রদের ক্ষোভ মেটাতে অনেক বেশি সতর্ক। শনিবার কেন্দ্রীয় স্বাস্থ্যমন্ত্রী রামভদ্রস জা নিয়েছেন, এইমুসে আসন সংখ্যা ৫০ থেকে বাড়িয়ে ৯০ করা হবে। এ ছাড়াও, কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীন নটি মেডিক্যাল কলেজেও আসন সংখ্যা বাড়ানো হবে। আন্দোলনকারীদের প্রথম থেকেই আশঙ্কা ছিল, সংরক্ষণের চাপে তাঁদের পড়াশোনার সুযোগ কমে যাবে। কিন্তু কেন্দ্র তখনই স্পষ্ট

জানিয়ে দেন, সাধারণ শ্রেণির আসন সংখ্যা কমানো হবে না। সংরক্ষণের প্রয়োজনে বাড়ানো হবে আসন সংখ্যা। এতে সব মিলিয়ে বাড়বে পড়াশোনার সুযোগ।

কিন্তু তাতেও থামেনি আন্দোলন। অস্তিত থামার লক্ষণ দেখাননি ধর্মঘটীরা। তবে কিছু কিছু জায়গায় রাজ্য সরকারগুলি ধর্মঘটীদের ব্যাপারে কড়া মনোভাব নিতে শুরু করেছেন। কনটিক সরকার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে, যে সব ডাক্তার দীর্ঘ দিন ধরে বিনা কারণে অনুপস্থিত থাকেছেন, তাঁদের বরখাস্ত করা হবে। ইতিমধ্যেই বিভিন্ন হাসপাতাল মিলিয়ে ১৭৫ জন চিকিৎসককে বরখাস্ত করা হয়েছে। আমদাবাদের ডাক্তারদের মনোভাবও কঠোর। সেখানেও ডাক্তারদের ধর্মঘটে নতিশ্বাস উঠছে রোগীদের। বারানসী, লখনউ, কটক-সহ বহু জায়গাতেই ধর্মঘটীদের জন্য চূড়ান্ত কষ্ট সহ্য করতে হচ্ছে সাধারণ মানুষকে।

শনিবার কলকাতা মেডিক্যাল কলেজে বিক্ষোভকারীরা যে ভাবে হাসপাতালের দরজা বন্ধ করে দেন, তাতে প্রচণ্ড অসুবিধায় পড়েন অসংখ্য রোগীর আত্মীয়েরা। হাসপাতালের দরজায় তালো কুলিয়ে দিয়ে সরকারের উপর চাপ বাড়তে চেয়েছিলেন সংরক্ষণ

এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

● বিক্ষম মণ্ডলবাদী শক্তি গড়তে আসবে ভিপি...পৃঃ ৫

Medicos' demand under study

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Quota: they want experts panel

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Central Government will examine the demand of medicos for setting up an expert committee to review the reservation policy, Union Minister Oscar Fernandes said on Sunday.

Earlier, Mr. Fernandes said the students had complained that Dr. Singh had agreed to some of their recommendations, which were not reflected in the subsequent statement. "We have discussed the matter with the Prime Minister again and will go back to the students now with clarifications," he added.

He, along with the Union Health and Family Welfare Secretary P.K. Hota and the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary, T.K.A. Nair, held a three-hour long meeting with the striking students on Sunday morning, but failed to arrive at a consensus. The students had stuck to their demand for "written assurance" by the Prime Minister and

the setting up of a judicial commission for reviewing the Centre's reservation policy. "The Government has nothing new to offer and we want a written assurance," a spokesperson of the Youth for Equality, spearheading the agitation, said.

The students and doctors have been on strike in Delhi for the past 15 days fearing shrinking of opportunities as a result of the 27 per cent reservation announced by the Government for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in higher educational institutions.

Moily to head Oversight Committee

Veerappa Moily, chairperson of the Administrative Reforms Commission, will head the Oversight Committee that will draw a time-bound road map for implementing reservation for the OBCs in higher educational institutes.

This was announced by Mr. Fernandes after meeting with the Prime Minister.

29 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

ব্যর্থ বৈঠক, কেন্দ্রের লিখিত প্রস্তাবও ফিরিয়ে দিল ছাত্রেরা

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৮ মে: অচলাবস্থা কাটল না আজও।

ছাত্রদের দাবি প্রসঙ্গে সরকার কী করতে পারে, তার একটি লিখিত প্রস্তাব আজ রাতে ছাত্রদের দেন কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী অক্ষয় ফার্নান্ডেজ। সেখানে ছাত্রদের বেশ কয়েকটি দাবি মেনে নেওয়ার কথা বলা হয়েছে। তার পরেই রাতে বৈঠকে বসে আন্দোলনকারীরা কেন্দ্রের প্রস্তাব ফিরিয়ে দেন। তাঁরা জানান, ধর্মঘট চলবে। মঙ্গলবার এইমসে ২৪ ঘণ্টার অনশন ধর্মঘট এবং বুধবার দিল্লিতে চিকিৎসা ধর্মঘটের ডাক দেওয়া হয়েছে বলে জানিয়েছেন ধর্মঘটীরা।

আজকের দ্বিতীয় পর্যায়ের বৈঠকে বসে অক্ষয় ছাত্রদের যে লিখিত আট দফা প্রস্তাব দেন, তাতে দেখা গিয়েছে, আন্দোলনকারীদের অনেক দাবিই মেনে নিয়েছে সরকার। একই সঙ্গে আন্দোলনরত আবাসিক ডাক্তার, ডাক্তারি ছাত্র ও শিক্ষকদের বিরুদ্ধে কোনও ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে না বলেও প্রতিশ্রুতি দেওয়া হয়েছে।

কিন্তু তার পরেও ছাত্রদের অনড় মনোভাবে অবাক অনেকাই। ছাত্রদের অভিযোগ, সরকার সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে বিভিন্ন প্রস্তাবের কথা জানালেও, কোনও চূড়ান্ত বিবৃতি দিচ্ছে না। তা ছাড়া, আসন বাড়ানো নিয়ে সরকারের দাবিও মানতে নারাজ তাঁরা। কিন্তু সরকারের হাত-পা বাঁধা। বাস্তব পরিস্থিতি অনুযায়ী, কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভার অনুমোদন না পাওয়া পর্যন্ত এ রকম কোনও পরিকল্পনা সরকারের পক্ষে জানানো সম্ভব নয়। ঠিক একই কারণে ছাত্রদের

কোনও লিখিত প্রতিশ্রুতি দিতে পারবে না তারা। তবে সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে যে 'ওভারসাইট' কমিটির কথা মনমোহন ছাত্রদের সঙ্গে বৈঠকে জানিয়েছিলেন, সংরক্ষণের বিষয়টি তারাই খতিয়ে দেখবে বলে সরকারের তরফে আজ জানানো হয়েছে। বীরাঙ্গা মইলির নেতৃত্বে ওই কমিটি মেডিক্যাল কলেজগুলির প্রধানদের নিয়ে একটি বিশেষজ্ঞ কমিটি গড়বে। তারাই সব

করছে, এই ভাবে ক্লাস থেকে দূরে সরে আখেরে পিছিয়েই পড়ছেন তাঁরা। সরকার এখন যা দিচ্ছে, তার বেশি যে মিলবে না, তা-ও তাঁরা বুঝতে পেরেছেন। কিন্তু ক্রমেই আন্দোলনে আইআইটির মতো অন্য উচ্চ শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠান যোগ দেওয়ায় রাশ চলে যাচ্ছে ডাক্তারি ছাত্রদের হাতের বাইরে। একই সঙ্গে প্রচারের মায়াও কাটাতে পারছেন না আন্দোলনকারীরা।



অনুপ্রেরণার খোঁজে। — পি টি আই

খতিয়ে প্রয়োজনীয় সুপারিশ দেবে। তা ছাড়া, মেডিক্যাল কলেজগুলিতে আসন বাড়ানো নিয়ে একটি নির্দেশিকাও ইতিমধ্যেই পাঠিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে।

তবে ছাত্রেরা যতই নিজেদের দাবিতে অনড় থাকার মনোভাব দেখাক, তাঁদের মধ্যেই এ বারে স্পষ্ট বিভাজনের ইঙ্গিত মিলেছে। বিশ্বস্ত সূত্রের খবর, আজ মন্ত্রী, প্রিন্সিপাল সেক্রেটারির সামনেই ছাত্র-প্রতিনিধিরা নিজেদের মধ্যে কথা কাটাকাটিতে জড়িয়ে পড়েন। আন্দোলনকারীদের একাংশ এখন মনে

এর আগে অক্ষয় ফার্নান্ডেজ, প্রধানমন্ত্রীর প্রিন্সিপাল সেক্রেটারি টি কে এনায়ার, স্বাস্থ্য সচিব পি কে হোতা এবং স্বাস্থ্য মন্ত্রকের কর্তাদের সঙ্গে ছাত্রদের প্রথম দফার বৈঠকে সরকারের তরফে কয়েকটি প্রতিশ্রুতি দেওয়া হলেও, ছাত্রদের বক্তব্য, ওই সব দাবিগুলি মেনে নেওয়ার কোনও স্পষ্ট পরিকল্পনা সরকারের নেই।

সংরক্ষণ-বিরোধী ছাত্ররা ঠিক কী কী দাবি জানিয়েছিলেন কেন্দ্রের কাছে? 'অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির জন্য প্রস্তাবিত ২৭ শতাংশ সংরক্ষণ একেবারে বাতিল করতে হবে', আগের এই কটর অবস্থান থেকে এখন বেশ কিছুটা সরে এসেছে 'ইউথ ফর ইকোয়ালিটি'। তাঁদের বর্তমানে দাবি হল, ক) সাধারণ আসন যাতে একটিও না কমে, তা সরকারকে নিশ্চিত করতে হবে, খ) শুধু মাত্র অর্থনৈতিক ভাবে অনগ্রসর ছাত্রেরাই যাতে সংরক্ষণের সুবিধা পান, তা নিশ্চিত করতে হবে এবং গ) সংরক্ষণের

এর পর সাতের পাতায়

● তালা ঝোলানোর ছমকি.. পৃঃ ৬

ব্যর্থ বৈঠক

প্রথম পাতার পর

বিষয়টি খতিয়ে দেখার জন্য একটি বিশেষজ্ঞ কমিটি গঠন করতে হবে। প্রতিবাদকারীদের মতে, সাধারণ আসন সংখ্যা কমানো হবে না বলে সরকার প্রতিশ্রুতি দিলেও বর্তমান পরিকাঠামোতে তা বাস্তবায়িত করা সম্ভব নয়। সেই প্রেক্ষিতে ২০০৭ থেকে সংরক্ষণ চালু করার জন্য সরকার ঠিক কী ব্যবস্থা নেওয়ার কথা জিজ্ঞাস্য, তা-ও ছাত্রদের জানাতে হবে। এর মধ্যেই আজ বিজেপি নেতা দীপক কুমার আডবানী বলেন, সংরক্ষণের বিষয়টি খতিয়ে দেখতে বিশেষজ্ঞ কমিটি গড়ুক সরকার। মেধার ঔৎকর্ষ অক্ষয় রঞ্জে কী ভাবে এ বিষয়ে ইতিবাচক ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া যায়, তা খতিয়ে দেখুক ওই কমিটি। আগামিকাল বিজেপি'র জাতীয় অধিবেশন শুরু হচ্ছে। তার ঠিক আগেই এই বিবৃতি বিশেষ তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ বলে মনে করছে রাজনৈতিক মহল।

29 MAY 2006

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Quotas turn caste politics UPSide down

SP, BSP show unusual restraint over Lucknow's medics' strikes but their eye is on the upper-caste vote, and next year's elections

VRINDA GOPINATH

It is indeed a delicious irony: as young medics and soft-ware undergraduates pick up brooms and cudgels protesting against reservations for OBCs in institutes of higher learning in cities and towns all over the country, the conch blares in support of a Dalit-Brahmin alliance in Uttar Pradesh, mooted by none other than Bahujan Samaj Party leader Mayawati. And only a fortnight ago, UP Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, yet another Reservations Ringer, declared April 30 as Parushuram Jayanti — and a state holiday. Parushuram has been revered by Brahmins since

centuries but the festival never had state patronage before.

UP is turning the reservations debate on its head, with the first generation Quota Raj leaders Mayawati and Mulayam courting the upper castes, and it's not without reason. If the Uttar Pradesh caste cauldron hasn't boiled over, it's because both have displayed unusual restraint and counsel on the reservation issue. This newfound caution only reveals their uncoincidental bid to woo the upper castes, a segment crucial to their victory in the forthcoming Assembly polls in February 2007.

After both the Congress and BJP ceded their space to the two Mandal leaders, the Brahmins

have been desperately looking for a party which will look after their interests. Mayawati is trying to forge the Congress's old winning combination — a Brahmin-Muslim-Dalit alliance. Mulayam too is wooing the Brahmins now that his Muslim votebank is getting restive. However, observers say the Brahmins seem unlikely to move towards Yadav as there is a clash of interests.

For starters, the Mulayam Government has refused to enforce ESMA despite his Chief Secretary declaring the government's intention to do so early last week. The law, if invoked, would make the anti-reservations strike illegal in the state and force the striking doctors



IT FITS: Mayawati at the BSP's Brahmin Sammelan

to go back to work or invite criminal charges against them.

In the past weeks, as anti-reservations protests and demonstrations rage in the country, Mulayam's line — and excuse for caution in dealing with protesters in his state — is that he had already brought reservations for OBCs in the state when he was

chief minister in 1994. However, the reservations he talks about are in government jobs, not in institutions of higher learning, which is the focus of the students' current ire. However, the SP did raise the quota issue in Parliament in the recently concluded session.

And Mayawati's stand, ever since the anti-reservations struggle began, has been a preference for increasing seats in colleges and institutes rather than take away seats

from the general category. Both Mulayam and Mayawati have gone the generalist way, demanding an increase in the seats available rather than insist on reservations only.

The BSP's strategy of wooing upper castes, especially Brahmins, came to public notice in June 2005 with its first Brahmin sammelan, organised in Lucknow by its Brahmin national general secretary, Sudhir Mishra. The process to expand its political base beyond the Dalits had actually begun earlier, when the BSP gave 97 tickets to upper castes, from Brahmins to vaishis (traders), in the last Assembly election.

Scenting the success of the Brahmin rallies, the BSP then launched the vaish sammelans last year, headed by party spokesperson Sudhir Goel. The latest vaish rally was in Kanpur on April 24, 2006. It was a "resounding success", claims Goel, with traders' associations flocking to it and seeking to join the party. "The slogan, 'Bahujan, Mataujan bhai, bhai! Lala nahin, lal hai' is catching on among traders", Goel says.

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TUESDAY, MAY 30, 2006

Get back to work

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P. ...
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By continuing their strike protesting against the Cabinet decision to institute, from the next academic year, 27 per cent reservation for Other Backward Classes in Central educational institutions even after getting Prime Ministerial assurances that there would be no decrease in the seats available under the general category, doctors and medical students are guilty of gross dereliction of duty on top of social insensitivity. With the Central Government even promising to examine the demand for setting up an experts' committee to review reservation policy and the Supreme Court deciding to examine the whole issue, the medicos have no plausible excuses left to continue a strike that has paralysed health care in several Central medical institutions. To insist on "written assurances" from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, or to claim they are carrying on the strike to 'protect' the interests of students of all subjects, is little more than a specious attempt to find new excuses to prolong a morally indefensible strike. True, medicos are the most affected by the Centre's decision to extend reservation to higher education: very few seats are available at the post-graduation level where the courses branch into super-specialities. The basic degree, MBBS, is only the first step in a medical career. Unlike in engineering, where graduation is enough for a student to start a career, post-graduate specialisation is a must for a doctor to move ahead professionally. The promise to increase the number of seats to offset the allocation of 27 per cent of the seats to OBCs should allay all apprehensions on this score.

That the medicos are refusing to see reason suggests their concerns lie elsewhere. Traditionally, the Indian Medical Association, a national body of doctors, has been opposed to any increase in the number of medical college seats. Although the negative position is couched in terms of opposition to a dilution of standards and privatisation of medical education, the self-serving, protectionist streak is unmistakable. The greater the number of doctors, the more competitive medical practice gets. Against this stands a great social imperative. According to the World Health Organisation's country health profile, there are only 5.2 physicians for 10,000 people in India. This average conceals imbalances, including an abysmal deployment of medical personnel in rural areas. Doctors are hesitant to work in rural areas owing to a combined poverty of facilities and remuneration. Independent of the reservation quota controversy, the situation calls for widening the portals of medical education, which in turn calls for increased investment in infrastructure and upgrading facilities. The striking medicos would do well to highlight these issues instead of contraposing 'equality of opportunity' against 'social justice' and 'merit' against 'reservation.' The striking doctors and medical students must resume duty without further delay as suggested by the apex court — or run the risk of losing all public sympathy.

30 MAY 2006

13-member quota Oversight Committee set up

Committee told to submit report to Union Government by August 31

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Union Government on Monday set up a 13-member Oversight Committee to monitor the implementation of reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in institutions of higher education. Also, three separate groups have been set up to draw up the modalities for implementing the decision in engineering and management institutions besides Central universities.

To be headed by Administrative Reforms Commission Chairman Veerappa Moily, the committee has as its members Planning Commission member B. Mungekar, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research Director-General R. Mashelkar, University Grants Commission Chairman Sukhadeo K. Thorat, former Vice-Chancellor of National Law School of India (Bangalore) G. Mohan Gopal, All-India Council for Technical Education Vice-Chairman R.A.

Yadav, Indian Council of Medical Research Director-General N.K. Ganguly and former Union Secretary R.V.V. Ayyar. Besides, the Secretaries to the Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and the Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Agricultural Research & Education, and Expenditure will be ex-officio members of the committee while Planning Commission Member-Secretary R.R. Shah will serve as its Member-Secretary also.

The Oversight Committee has been asked to submit its report by August 31 so that the reservation policy can be implemented in time for the next academic session, as the admission process in institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Manage-

• **Three groups set up to draw up modalities for implementing the decision**

• **The groups asked to complete their job by July 31**

ment for 2007-08 will begin in the last quarter of this year itself. Besides monitoring the implementation of 27 per cent reservation for OBCs, the committee will also have to assess the additional infrastructure and other requirements for increasing the overall availability of seats to the level that will keep the general category unaffected by the increase in the reserved component.

For the committee to wrap up its work by August 31, the three expert groups have been asked to complete their job by July 31. The groups have been asked to identify the number of OBC seats and other category seats in undergraduate and post-graduate courses to project the student intake for 2007-08. Also, they have to determine the fac-

ulty and other infrastructure requirements to cater to the increased intake, suggest phasing of expenditure — both recurring and non-recurring — and propose short-term and other preparatory measures to be taken by each institute to deal with the enhanced intake.

The group for engineering institutions will be headed by the former Vice-Chancellor of Anna University, M. Anandakrishnan. Directors of two IITs, Sanjay Dhande (Kanpur) and S.K. Dube (Kharagpur), Director of Indian Institute of Information Technology Design and Manufacturing (Jabalpur) Sanjeev Bhargava, Directors of two National Institutes of Technology R.P. Dahiya (Jaipur) and Y.V. Rao (Warangal), Associate Director of Indian Institute of Science (Bangalore) N. Balakrishnan, Dean of the Saranpur campus of IIT Roorkee I.M. Mishra, and National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) professor Indira Raja-

man will be its other members. The group for management institutions will be headed by IIM (Bangalore) Director Samuel Paul and will have as its members four other IIM Directors, Bakul Dholakia (Ahmedabad), Krishna Kumar (Kozhikode), Shekhar Chaudhury (Kolkata) and Devi Singh (Lucknow), besides National Institute of Industrial Engineering (Mumbai) Director S.D. Awale.

The group for Central universities will be headed by former Aligarh Muslim University Vice-Chancellor Sayed Hamid. Other members are Vice-Chancellors of four Central universities — Panjab Singh (Banaras Hindu University), Deepak Pental (Delhi University), Pramod Tandon (North-Eastern Hill University), Syed E. Hasnain (Hyderabad University) — and NIPFP professor M. Govinda Rao.

See also Page 12

30 MAY 2007

THE HINDU

Quota in SC court

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

9-Case 3 Position 2-22-1975

New Delhi, May 29: At a time striking medicos are demanding an independent evaluation of the government's reservation policy, the Supreme Court today decided to examine the latest Other Backward Classes quota in all its "social and political ramifications".

The court also raised the question who an OBC is and asked the government to explain the norms for identifying these classes — an issue linked to their numbers and, therefore, the quota percentage.

It also sent notices to the ministries concerned — including the human resource development ministry — giving them eight weeks to explain how exactly the quota was

going to be implemented.

"Now that we have taken up the matter, they (the agitating students) should call off the strike," the vacation bench said — an appeal the medicos rejected.

The court took note of petitions, filed by Shiv Khera and advocate Ashok Kumar Thakur, which argued that the government's quota policy would divide the country on the basis of caste. It said it would study the effect reservations have on society.

"These questions have serious social and political ramifications and this court will deal with it appropriately," the bench of Justice Arijit Pasayat and Justice L.S. Panta said.

The court's stress on the definition of an OBC could put under the scanner the exact

share of backward classes in Indian society.

In the mid-1950s, the Kaka Kalelkar commission had identified 1,200 backward classes. The Mandal commission — which later provided the basis for 27 per cent reservation for OBCs in government jobs — prepared a list of 2,200 such castes. The government later added another 1,000 to the list.

Mandal assumed that 52 per cent of India's population belonged to the backward castes, but Thakur pointed out that there had been no census on the basis of caste since 1931.

The petitions challenge the validity of the 93rd Constitutional Amendment Act extending reservation in higher learning for the socially and economically backward.

■ See Page 6

30 MAY 1975

THE TELEGRAPH

Language of Caste

*Economy is creating
new identities*

In many ways, caste is about numbers. The political consensus we have for creating OBC quotas in central educational institutions is largely because parties are aware of the electoral clout of the other backward classes. In 1980, the Mandal commission assumed that the OBC component in the population was 52 per cent. The National Sample Survey Organisation estimates that OBCs form only 33 per cent of the population. The National Family Health Survey concludes that the figure is only 29 per cent. The Supreme Court's directive to the Centre to explain the rationale for OBC quotas will further complicate the matter. In the absence of reliable data, the Centre will be hardpressed to explain how it has arrived at the figure, 27 per cent, for OBC reservations. The last caste census was way back in 1931. Independent India decided to do away with caste enumeration on the premise that it would divide the country. It is time to question this premise. Caste is a reality and a crucial factor in influencing public policy. It is best to have empirical data which reflect reality and formulate policies accordingly. A caste census should go beyond mere enumeration of people and generate a social and economic profile of various castes. This would help the government to rationalise the OBC list. A caste census is a necessary evil.

What is lost in the quota debate is the impact of technology and economics on social relations and how these are changing. Occupation was the defining category that determined hierarchies in Manu's varnashrama. Manu assumed that economic and social orders complemented each other. It is true of the modern world as well. As economic relations change, new castes are being constituted. Old castes and social prejudices associated with them disappear. The H1-B visa created the caste of US green card holder; the BPO boom is spawning a new caste of yuppies in call centres. They have created new geographies, time zones, and aspirations. Old social orders break down as market forces offer avenues of wealth generation. Economic emancipation subverts existing caste hierarchies. In a knowledge economy, proficiency in English is the key to upward mobility. Our education system should be revamped to equip students with English language skills. Let students learn the language from the primary class. In today's world, the magic potion for social emancipation is not quotas but English, the commercial, medical and scientific language of the world. Even desi language chauvinists will not disagree.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Wrong Route, Right Direction

Reservation policy needs to be fine-tuned

Yogendra Yadav and Satish Deshpande

A decision wrongly arrived at need not always be a wrong decision. We need to remember this as we begin to understand the long-term consequences of the government's decision to implement 27 per cent reservations for OBCs in higher educational institutions.

The way in which this decision was taken exemplifies what is wrong with the policy-making process in our country. A major decision affecting the career prospects of lakhs of students every year was taken without careful deliberation and transparent procedures that could have inspired some confidence. Larger political considerations were outweighed by short-term political games that are routinely played in Delhi. Thus a major opportunity to fine-tune the policy instruments of social justice was lost by default as a nervous government fell back on a tested, tried and tired formula of reservation based on a simple caste-bloc approach. We may have to wait for another decade or so for another opportunity to present itself. This is clearly not how big decisions should be taken.

Yet it does not mean that the decision is a disaster for the country, as critics of the policy would have us believe. Viewed in a long-term historical perspective, Mandal II is a logical corollary of Mandal I. It takes forward the process of transfer of social and political power to majority communities. The government's decision will help reduce the extreme inequalities in educational and job opportunities for different caste-communities in our country. The data of the 55th round of the National Sample Survey shows that in urban India, out of 1,000 upper caste Hindus, 253 were graduates. Among Hindu OBCs, this figure was only 86 per 1,000. We do not have reliable information on the caste-wise distribution of well-paid jobs in the organised sector. But it is quite obvious that upper caste Hindus, who constitute anything between a quarter to one-third of our population,

have cornered around twice as many jobs as their share in population might justify.

Notwithstanding all its problems, the government's decision is likely to reduce this kind of skewed distribution. It is likely to improve the access of OBCs to higher education and to middle-class jobs. It should also help expand the pool from within OBCs that can take advantage of the existing scheme of reservation in government jobs. In that sense this decision is a step in the right direction. Even a crude caste-bloc based quota is better than no provision at all.

An appreciation of the positives of this decision should not lead us to close our eyes to some of the long-term costs. The government's



decision to use a one-dimensional policy of caste-bloc based quota cannot but result in an inefficient targeting of this scheme. The relatively better off families, that too from 'upper' OBCs, will be able to corner most of the benefits. In regional terms, students from south India and other states with long history of affirmative action and backward caste movement are much better placed to take advantage of this scheme. Needless to say, most of these opportunities will be cornered by OBC men, for the gender gap in education is higher among OBC communities as compared to upper caste Hindus. The inability to target the scheme very efficiently is bound to give rise to deep resentment. Many non-OBC

students and their families would feel, and rightly so, that they are more disadvantaged than those OBC students who are getting admissions based on the new reservations.

Can the government still do something to remedy the situation and reduce some of these costs? The government's policy declaration closes one of these possibilities, namely that of attending to disadvantaged groups other than OBCs. But it can still do something to ensure that reservation for OBCs is targeted more efficiently. First, it can declare that the 'creamy layer' within OBCs will be excluded from the benefits of the new reservation. The exclusion of 'creamy layer' is already in operation for job reservations and the government has to simply apply it to education. Second, the 27 per cent quota should be sub-divided among 'upper' and 'lower' OBCs. Such subdivisions already exist in many states and the government can request the National Commission for Backward Classes, a statutory body to prepare lists of upper and lower OBC for each state. Third, the government can make some provision to ensure that OBC women have a special opportunity to access this quota. Finally, for taking a final decision on all these and related matters to target the OBC quota more effectively, the government can constitute an independent expert committee to work out the modalities.

Besides these immediate and short-term measures, the government must think of two long-term measures. First, it must get NSSO or some independent organisation to carry out a comprehensive nationwide survey of the social profile of students of higher educational institutions and job holders in the organised sector, public as well as private. Lack of such data is the biggest hurdle blocking the transition to a more transparent, robust and fine-tuned policy-making process in future. Second, it is time the government constituted a Diversity and Disadvantage Commission, a statutory body to regularly monitor the diversity profile of all public institutions and to advise the government on improving it.

Yadav is senior fellow at CSDS; Deshpande is professor of sociology at Delhi School of Economics.

31 MAR 2006

THE TIMES OF INDIA

End strike or face contempt: SC

9. Cassin's Kavhi 79-1 81/5

Dhananjay Mahapatra | TNN

New Delhi: Upset with its appeal to call off the strike falling on deaf ears and concerned by the deteriorating health services, the supreme court on Tuesday brandished the contempt sword before agitating medics and said such action at a time when the matter is sub-judice amounts to contempt of court.

Taking suo motu action a day after it had issued notices to the Centre on two PILs challenging the 27% OBC quota policy, a vacation bench comprising Justices Arijit Pasayat and Lakshwar Singh Pantamixed no words in expressing its feelings over the medics not paying heed to its sincere plea to call off their 17-day-old strike in "greater public interest".

"We thought with the appeal, good sense will prevail," it said and explained that the purpose of the strike, and the examination of the issue by the apex court were driven by the same logic.

"What is the purpose of the strike? Exactly the same as we are doing with the PILs,"

said the bench, which on Tuesday focussed on the deteriorating health care facilities in government hospitals due to the strike.

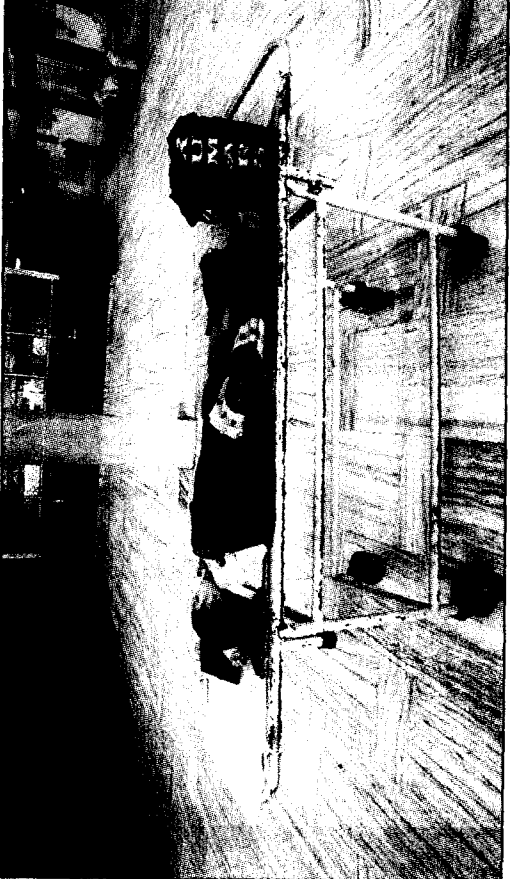
"Patients waiting to be treated are left at the mercy of God," said the bench as it gave full vent to its anguish before Additional Solicitor General Amarendra Saran.

"We are examining the issue and had appealed for immediate calling off of the strike. Surprisingly, the contrary is happening. It is a serious matter. Ultimately, people wanting to get treated in hospitals are getting affected," the bench said.

Making the seriousness of the issue amply clear to the striking doctors, the bench said in two earlier judgments, the apex court has ruled that any agitation or speech given by parties at a time when the matter is sub-judice can be equated with contempt of court.

"If the doctors are overreaching the orders of the court, we will deal with the matter in accordance with law," the bench said while adjourning further hearing on the matter till Wednesday.

Additional Solicitor General Gopal Sub-



A child patient waits on a stretcher at the deserted OPD of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi on Tuesday

ramaniam, who had rushed to the court by this time, was told by the bench to file a memorandum detailing the latest position of the agitation. Both Saran and Subramaniam attempted to convey to the court the efforts taken so far taken by the government.

ধর্মঘট তুলতে হুঁশিয়ারি এ বার সুপ্রিম কোর্টেরই

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ৩০ মে: অবিলম্বে ধর্মঘট না তুললে এ বারে আদালত অবমাননার দায়ে পড়তে হতে পারে সংরক্ষণ-বিরোধী আন্দোলনকারীদের। সুপ্রিম কোর্ট আজ কড়া ভাষায় এই হুঁশিয়ারি দেওয়ার পরেও অবশ্য অচলাবস্থা কাটছে না। এইমসে গভীর রাত পর্যন্ত বৈঠকের পরে 'ইউথ ফর ইকোয়ালিটি' অবশেষে ধর্মঘটে অনড় থাকার সিদ্ধান্তই নিয়েছে।

এর আগে আজ আদালতের অনুরোধের পরেও মেডিক্যাল ছাত্র এবং আবাসিক ডাক্তারেরা ধর্মঘট না তোলায় ক্ষোভ প্রকাশ করে সুপ্রিম কোর্ট। এর ফলে ধর্মঘটীরা আদালত অবমাননার দায়ে পড়তে পারেন, এই হুঁশিয়ারি জানিয়ে বিচারপতি অরিজিৎ পাসায়াত ও বিচারপতি এল এস পাণ্ডাকে নিয়ে গঠিত সুপ্রিম কোর্টের অবসরকালীন বেঞ্চ বলে, সংরক্ষণের বিষয়টি আদালত নিজের হাতে নেওয়ার পরেও ডাক্তারি ছাত্রেরা ধর্মঘট চালিয়ে যাচ্ছেন। এতে সব চেয়ে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হচ্ছেন রোগী ও তাঁদের আত্মীয় পরিজনদের। এই মুহূর্তে সরকারি নীতি নয়, ধর্মঘটের ফলে সাধারণ লোকের যে দুর্ভোগ হচ্ছে, তা নিয়েই চিন্তিত আদালত। ছাত্র-আন্দোলনের বর্তমান পরিস্থিতি সম্পর্কে আদালতকে অবহিত করার জন্য সরকারের তরফে অতিরিক্ত সলিসিটর জেনারেল গোপাল সুব্রহ্মণ্যমকে কাল স্মারকলিপি পেশ করতে নির্দেশ দিয়েছে সুপ্রিম কোর্ট। এত দিন সমাজের বিভিন্ন স্তর থেকে একতরফা সমর্থন পেয়ে আসছিলেন ধর্মঘটী ডাক্তার ও ছাত্রেরা। শুধু যুবসমাজ নয়, ছাত্রদের বাবা-মায়েরাও আন্দোলনে সামিল হয়েছিলেন। কীসের ভিত্তিতে সংরক্ষণের কথা বলা হচ্ছে, তা জানতে চেয়ে গত কাল সুপ্রিম কোর্ট কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারকে নোটিস দেওয়ায় আন্দোলনকারীরা স্বভাবতই আরও উল্লসিত হন। কিন্তু এ বার ছাত্রদের দিকেই আঙুল তুলেছে সর্বোচ্চ আদালত।

শুধু বিচার বিভাগ নয়, ছাত্রদের অনমনীয় মনোভাবে অসন্তুষ্ট সরকারও। প্রয়োজনে কঠোর অবস্থান নিতেও যে তাঁরা তৈরি, আজ সেই ইঙ্গিতও দিয়েছেন কেন্দ্রীয় স্বাস্থ্যমন্ত্রী অক্ষয়মণি রামডাস। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে বৈঠকের পরে রামডাস জানান, সরকারি হাসপাতালের বেহাল অবস্থা সামাল দিতে আগামিকাল থেকে সেনা ও রেলের ডাক্তারদের কাজে লাগাবে কেন্দ্র। নয়া ডাক্তার নিয়োগ করার পরিকল্পনাও রয়েছে। কিছুটা অভিযোগের সুরেই রামডাস বলেন, "প্রধানমন্ত্রী নিজে ওঁদের সঙ্গে কথা বলার পরেও ছাত্রেরা আন্দোলন তুলছেন না।" ধর্মঘটীদের বিরুদ্ধে কঠোর ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া না হলেও সরকার যে আর ছাত্রদের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসবে না, তা-ও আজ স্পষ্ট করে দেন তিনি। তবে সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে তাদের তরফে কাজ চালিয়ে যাচ্ছে কেন্দ্র। সংরক্ষণ সংক্রান্ত 'ওভারসাইট কমিটি' আজ দিল্লিতে প্রথম বৈঠকটি করেছে। তার পরে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গেও দেখা করেন কমিটির প্রধান বীরাঙ্গা মইলি। আগামিকাল ফের বৈঠকে বসছে 'ওভারসাইট কমিটি'।

সুপ্রিম কোর্টের ভর্ৎসনার পরেও অবশ্য এখনই আন্দোলন তুলে নেওয়ার ইঙ্গিত দেননি ধর্মঘটী ছাত্রেরা। কিন্তু সংশ্লিষ্ট মহলের মতে, বেহাল স্বাস্থ্য পরিষেবার জেরে সাধারণ রোগীদের যে সমস্যায় পড়তে হচ্ছে, তার পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে ইতিমধ্যেই ডাক্তারি ছাত্র আন্দোলনের সমর্থনে ফটল ধরতে শুরু করেছে। এমনকী ডাক্তারদের নিজেদের মধ্যেও এই বিষয়ে মতান্তর রয়েছে। এক দলের মতে, সুপ্রিম কোর্টের আবেদনের পরে আন্দোলন তুলে নেওয়াই উচিত। 'ইউথ ফর ইকোয়ালিটি' অবশ্য জানিয়েছে, আইনজীবীদের সঙ্গে কথা বলে তবেই আন্দোলনের ভবিষ্যৎ নিয়ে সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হবে।

এর পর সাতের ৮

হুঁশিয়ারি এ বার সুপ্রিম কোর্টের

প্রথম পাতার পর

বিজেপির জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকেও সংরক্ষণ প্রসঙ্গ উঠেছে আজ। ধর্মের ভিত্তিতে সংরক্ষণের বিরোধিতা করেছে বিজেপি। অন্য দিকে, সিপিআই নেতা এ বি বর্ধনের মতে, যে সব শিল্পপতিরা বেসরকারি ক্ষেত্রে সংরক্ষণের বিরোধী, তাঁরাই এর বিরুদ্ধে প্রচার চালাচ্ছে। রাষ্ট্রপতি কালামও আজ এ নিয়ে মুখ খুলেছেন। তিনি উচ্চবিত্ত শ্রেণিকে সংরক্ষণের আওতা থেকে বাদ দেওয়ার পক্ষে সওয়াল করেছেন।

সব মিলিয়ে বর্তমান পরিস্থিতিতে সরকারই সব থেকে বেশি লাভবান হবে বলে মনে করছে ওয়াকিবহাল

মহলা। দফায় দফায় আলোচনার পরেও ছাত্রেরা আন্দোলন চালিয়ে যাওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ায় সরকারের দায়িত্ব অনেক কমে গিয়েছে। এই পরিস্থিতিতে সরকার যদি বলপ্রয়োগের সিদ্ধান্ত নিত, তা হলে হাওয়া আবার ছাত্রদের দিকেই ঘুরে যেত। কিন্তু কেন্দ্র যে সে রকম কোনও ব্যবস্থা নিচ্ছে না, তা রামডাসের কথা থেকে পরিষ্কার। বদলে সরকার এখন এটাই দেখাতে চাইছে, তাদের তরফে সব রকম চেষ্টা সত্ত্বেও ছাত্রদের অনমনীয়তার কারণে সমঝোতায় পৌঁছানো সম্ভব হচ্ছে না।

সরকার এবং আন্দোলনকারী ডাক্তার, দুই রাজার এই 'লড়াই'য়ে উলুখাগড়া কিন্তু সাধারণ রোগীরাই।

Defiant docs court trouble

Resume work or face action: SC

HT-1 3/15
S. Chandra & Bandhu

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 30

A DAY after striking medics ignored its appeal to call off their strike, the Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered them to resume work in the "larger public interest" or face the court's wrath.

It minced no words about the consequences that would follow if they did not do so. The Bench, headed by Justice Arijit Pasavat, reminded the striking doctors of at least two earlier judgments that make agitation, protests or strikes on any matter pending before the court tantamount to contempt.

Acting on its own, the court said it was disappointed that the doctors had chosen to shrug off its appeal, on Monday, to end the strike.

"Ultimately, people wanting to get treated in hospitals are getting affected," the two-judge Bench noted. "...In view of the fact that reservation for OBCs is being examined by this court, the protest strikes relating to the issue should be called off," it said.

There were contrary views too. SC counsel Prashant Bhushan said, "A similar order had also been passed in the Clemenceau issue... I don't agree with this view. Courts cannot stifle the democratic

right to protest just because a matter is sub-judice."

The Supreme Court has directed the government to submit a report on the status of the strike on Thursday. The matter will be listed on Thursday for further follow-up action.

Shortly after the order was pronounced, additional solicitor general Gopal Subramaniam said the government would communicate the order to the striking students and their associations. He hoped the doctors would return to work as the strike has had a "debilitating effect" on patients.

The court was dealing with the matter and "those who want to rethink must not take recourse to agitational or diversionary measures as it is inconsistent with legal ventilation of grievances," he said.

In a similar move, the Calcutta High Court, too, has rapped striking medics in the state for denying patients access to health-care services in state hospitals.

While upholding the medics' right to protest, Justices K.J. Sengupta and S.P. Mitra on Tuesday said, "The students, doctors and hospital staff have no right to prevent patients from entering hospitals and hampering healthcare services on the pretext of strike."

See also Page 2



Striking anti-quota medics squat on the railway tracks at Chandigarh station on Tuesday.

Govt to tap army, railways

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 30

THE GOVERNMENT on Tuesday hardened its stance against the striking medics and moved to draft army and railway doctors to keep services going in state-run hospitals. It also decided to recruit doctors from Wednesday.

The decision came shortly after the Supreme Court voiced concern for people in need of healthcare. "We will ask army and railway doctors to work. We are going to maintain services in the hospitals from tomorrow, come what may," health minister Anbumani Ramadoss said after a meeting with the legal cover.

Prime Minister. But he replied in the negative when asked if the government might invoke the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA).

While retired doctors would be hired on contract, the new recruits would be retained. "Two weeks is too long a time and a lot of poor patients from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and the Northeast are suffering," the minister said.

Unfazed by his announcement and the apex court's virtual threat of initiating contempt proceedings against them, the medics decided to continue their agitation and began looking for legal cover.

"We are consulting legal experts," Dr Vinod Patra, president of the AIIMS Resident Doctors Association, said. The medics found support from advocates affiliated to the Lawyer's Forum for Equality (LFFE), who sat on a daylong dharna at the Karkardooma district court in Delhi.

Calling the reservation policy divisive, the lawyers urged the masses to support their agitation. LFFE convener D.D. Pandey said the reservation policy for SCs and STs, already in place for 60 years, hadn't ensured equality amongst citizens. The OBC quota would serve no purpose, he said. The medics weren't any less de-

fiant elsewhere in the country.

In Chandigarh, they blocked traffic, formed human chains and locked the gates of state-run hospitals. Resident doctors at the Post Graduate Institute for Medical Education and Research and students at the Government Medical College and Hospital said they would burn their degree certificates on Wednesday.

In Bangalore, around 700 undergraduates, interns and post-graduate students took out a rally and burnt Arjun Singh's effigy. In Ahmedabad, they took out processions with about 5,000 private clinics and hospitals calling a "medical bandh".

HINDUSTAN TIMES ✓

Divide and rule

HR-6
coming
back
3/15

CONCEIVED IN political lust and born in transgression, the government's misguided reservation policy has opened up a Pandora's Box. In the face of weeks of agitation by students and the government's refusal to rethink on the issue, the Supreme Court has stepped in. Its queries — what's the statistical basis for determining 'other backward castes' and what would be the modalities to implement the reservations? — have the potential of ripping the country's already fragile social fabric and upending its politics. The last time there was a physical count of the thousands of *jatis* and castes of the country was in 1931. Thereafter, the Census of India has only counted the Dalits. How B.P. Mandal arrived at a figure of 52 per cent for the proportion of OBCs in the country has been a mystery of sorts. Using statistical sampling techniques, the National Sample Survey Organisation has come up with a figure of 32.9 per cent and the National Family Health Survey pegs it at 29.8 per cent. While caste prejudice ensures that few upper castes or OBCs will voluntarily pass off as Dalits, there has been ferocious competition in various states for groups to be declared OBC because of the Mandal advantage. Any effort to actually count

castes in today's politically charged atmosphere would not only be farcical, but deeply flawed and divisive.

The saddest part of the current argument is the loss of the moral compass that guided the founders of this nation to resolutely oppose quotas. The British empire had a cynical policy of keeping Indians divided on the basis of religion and caste. This was well understood by the Congress, which rejected Jinnah's demand for the reservation of 33 per cent seats for Muslims. The Viceroy's Communal Award of 1932 provided separate electorates for Muslims and Dalits. On Mahatma Gandhi's urging, Babasaheb Ambedkar rejected the proposal and settled for reserved seats for Dalits, with an electorate of all communities. Ambedkar, the guiding spirit of the Constitution and the inspiration of the Dalits, saw reservations for the scheduled castes and tribes as a limited and time-bound measure.

Nothing has happened in the intervening period to alter that vision. Unfortunately, a short focus on winning elections has led to many contemporary politicians being afflicted by myopia. The price they pay is the succession of fractured electoral verdicts. What the country pays is probably immeasurable.

97 26 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Quota hornets' nest awaits Arjun sting

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 29

HRD MINISTER Arjun Singh has further stirred the already turbulent political waters with his decision to hold a Press meet on Sunday in the backdrop of a raging controversy over the reservation issue. The move, which has raised curiosity across parties, comes even as his Cabinet colleague, Kapil Sibal, clarified that his remarks about excellence were not directed at the reservation policy being espoused by the HRD ministry. It had nothing to do "with either reservation or constitutional amendment", he said.

The timing of Sibal's clarification and Singh's media interaction is significant. It comes in the wake of reports that the HRD minister had, after Thursday's Cabinet meeting, strongly protested to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that ministers shouldn't criticise their colleagues on issues that do not come under their purview. He did not, however, name the S&T minister.

But on Saturday, Sibal told a newsagency from Tunis: "I've not talked about quota or reservation policy of the government... What I had said was that India must continue to have competitive edge because the world is looking towards it for high quality human resource", he

said. He wondered how this could this be viewed as his being against reservations which had to be decided by the Cabinet.

Besides, he said, "Excellence is not against reservation. You can achieve both things. You can have a reservation policy and still have excellence", he said, clearly keen not to leave any room for misunderstanding. He recalled that he had replied in the negative when a TV anchor had asked him at Hannover earlier this week if his references were directed at the reservation policy. He said he had not referred to Singh's proposal at all.

All eyes are now on the veteran leader, with even those who should normally be in the know of things completely unaware of what the former Madhya Pradesh CM has up his sleeves. Will he be part of the damage-containment exercise that Sibal's statement seemed to signify? Or will it lead to a fresh controversy?

Going by what the HRD minister had told the agitating students, he cannot talk about reservations as the Assembly elections are on. And if he is called upon to respond to Sibal's comments, he would need to talk about the quota subject. The curiosity about the senior Congress leader, who is known to play his cards close to his chest, has also heightened because of the accompanying political developments.



Students of the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences at a rally on the college premises in New Delhi.

RALLY ON MAY 2

STRIKING MEDICOS were holding talks with school and college students to gather support for a "huge demonstration" in the Capital on May 2 against the govt's move on OBC quota. Medicos in Lucknow, Bangalore and Kolkata have expressed solidarity with their counterparts in Delhi by holding protests, and wearing black badges.

IMA CALLS MEET

THE INDIAN Medical Association has called a general body meeting here on Monday to discuss the increase in issue of reservation for the OBCs, which hit the headlines after the police action on striking students in New Delhi. The medical students were also holding talks with the representatives of the Delhi Medical Association for support.

50% quota in state pvt colleges

Prafulla Marpakwar | TNN

Mumbai: Even as Delhi rages with protests against the Centre's reservation policy, the Congress-led Democratic Front government in Maharashtra has quietly approved a draft ordinance that will bring in a staggering 50% reservation in private professional institutions. Maharashtra is the first state in the country to move a proposal for reservation after the recent amendment to the constitution, and this could be implemented as early as the coming academic year.

The draft ordinance to provide for reservations for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, nomadic tribes and other backward classes was approved at a high-level meeting presided over by higher and technical education minister Dilip Walse Patil. Significantly, the new reservation policy will not be applicable to unaided minority institutions and deemed universities. "The draft will now be placed before the cabinet. We are planning to implement the new reservation policy from the ensuing academic session," a senior government official told TOI.

Another highlight of the proposed ordinance pertains to the Common Entrance Test. It has been proposed that barring deemed universities, CET will be conducted by the state government or the agency nominated by it for all private professional institutions. However, the decision on CET will be implemented from the next academic year

since for the current year, the association of private professional institutions has already taken steps to hold the test. More than a decade ago, the apex court had upheld the policy of reservation in private professional colleges. Then, reservation was 50% for SC\ST\VJ\NT and OBCs.

However, while disposing of a special leave petition filed by Pune-based P A Inamdar, the supreme court had ruled against reservation. After the apex court order, the Centre amended the constitution to provide for reservations, but it was left to individual state governments to make their own legislation. While most states are still deliberating on the new reservation policy, the Congress-led Democratic Front government has taken the lead by moving a proposal to provide for reservations in private professional institutions from the ensuing academic session.

As per the proposal, there will be reservation of 50% in unaided private, aided private and aided minority institutions but no reservation in unaided minority institutions. According to official records, there are 17 private medical colleges, a record

number of 147 private engineering colleges and five deemed universities—Bharti Vidyapeeth headed by industries minister Patangrao Kadar, D Y Patil University controlled by senior Congress leader D Y Patil, Radhikabai Meghe University headed by NCP MP Datta Meghe, Karad Institute of Medical Sciences and Pravara Nagar Rural Medical Institute controlled by sugar baron Balasaheb Vikhe Patil.

BOOKING

* **CET:** Government will conduct CET for all private professional institutions barring deemed varsities

* **Quotas:** All seats will be filled by managements. NRI, high-income and low-income quotas as per the existing policy

* **Reservation:** 50% for SC\ST\VJ\NT\OBCs

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

An anti-Dalit act, says CPI (M)

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for
CPI (M) of Rajasthan
1977

'Ban on book a fascist move to suppress voices of the depressed, downtrodden'

Special Correspondent

JAIPUR: The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has described the Rajasthan Government's decision to proscribe the book, "Ve Sharam Se Hindu Kahate Hai Kyon?" (Why are they ashamed of being called Hindus?) as an "anti-Dalit" act.

Coming in the wake of a similar action against another book, "Haqeeqat", the ban on the book, which expressed Dalit anguish against oppression of caste Hindus, was a fascist move to suppress the voices of the depressed and the downtrodden, the party said.

The State Secretariat of CPI (M) Rajasthan in a statement here said the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Government had been taking an adversarial stand against the Dalits and minorities ever since it came to power two-and-a-half years ago. The ban on "Haqeeqat", authored by M.G. Mathew, was followed by a planned attack by the workers of the BJP, Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad on

• **'BJP-led Government taking adversarial stand against Dalits, minorities'**

• **'Ban on "Haqeeqat" followed by planned attack by BJP, Bajrang Dal and VHP workers'**

• **'CM, Cabinet busy propagating obscurantist ideology, practices'**

Christian institutions with tacit support of the State Government, it said.

'Mission functionaries still in jail'

The attacks followed a State crackdown on the Kota-based Emmanuel Mission institutions and arrests of functionaries of the Mission. "Some of them, arrested in February last, are still in jail," the party pointed out.

The whole anti-Christian campaign culminated in an oppressive legislation, the Rajasthan Freedom of Religion Bill, passed by the State Assembly

early this month, it said.

"Now the Government machinery has turned against the Dalits by applying Sections 153-A and 295-A against Sohanlal Singaria, the author of the book, 'Ve Sharam Se Hindu Kahate Hai Kyon?' This is reflective of the feudal attitude of the Government," the party said. "If the same parameters are applied, Satyarth Prakash, authored by Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Kabir Vani, which too had spoken against the superstitions and outdated practices of Hindu religion, also would face the same fate in Rajasthan," the party pointed out.

The State Secretariat alleged attempts at saffronisation of school textbooks at the Higher Secondary level in Rajasthan. The educational institutions throughout the State were being subjected to outdated practices in the name of yoga education. The Chief Minister and her Cabinet colleagues were busy most of the time in propagation of obscurantist ideology and practices, it charged.

Medicos announce nationwide protest

Peaceful agitation to step up pressure on the Government to roll back quota

Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI: Protesting medical students have called for a peaceful nationwide protest this coming Tuesday to keep up the pressure on the Government to roll back the proposed move to provide 27 per cent reservation to Other Backward Classes in admission to Central universities and other institutions of higher learning.

Announcing this here on Friday, a student representative under the Youth for Equality banner, Sasmit Sarangi of the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), said the students want the Government to know that they would step up the agitation in case their demands are not met.

"We have called upon students all over the country to join the agitation and we are getting a positive response from the educational institutions. So far as many as 20 medical colleges have extended their support to our agitation including those in Kolkata, Punjab, Rajasthan and



"NO RESERVATION": Medical students demonstrating at India Gate in New Delhi on Friday.

- PHOTO: V. V. KRISHNAN.

Madhya Pradesh."

Expressing their displeasure at "a total lack of commitment from the Government to resolve the matter", Lady Hardinge Medical College student representative Amitasha Sinha said: "Union Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh on

Thursday refused to commit and we were disappointed with the meeting, hence the need to continue our agitation. Undergraduate medical students will continue to boycott classes till our demands don't get a positive response." While work at all five Delhi hospitals affected by the

medicos' agitation earlier this week returned to normal on Friday with resident doctors and interns resuming duty, undergraduate medical students continued to boycott classes and held a protest dharna at India Gate.

Students of AIIMS took out a protest march on Friday evening supported by over a dozen faculty members and student representatives from Maulana Azad Medical College, Lady Hardinge Medical College, University College of Medical Sciences and Vardhaman Mahavir Medical Colleges.

Extending their support to the protesting students, a senior AIIMS faculty member, Dr. B. K. Mohanty, said: "We condemn the manner in which the students were treated by the police and extend our support to their cause. The country needs students who come in with merit and not through reservations. We have to learn to respect merit. Youth is power and this movement by the students will bring positive results."

Kolkata echoes Delhi protests

SNS & PTI

KOLKATA/NEW DELHI, April 28: Scared by the Union human resource development minister, Mr Arjun Singh's reservation-related comments on the all-India post-graduate medical examinations, junior doctors and students of the National Medical College today staged a demonstration on the institution premises before submitting a memorandum to the principal.

The minister spoke of a 49.5 per cent reservation for the listed classes, provoking furious agitations in New Delhi. Kolkata's medical students and doctors today echoed the protests voiced in the country's capital city.

"The minister's statement has far-reaching consequences," said Dr Nishantadeb Ghatak, of the National Medical College, adding: "Quotas discriminate against merit." Dr Nurul Islam wondered why no political party had condemned the ministerial statement. "Today, Mr Singh talks of reservation. Tomorrow, he might table a Bill in Parliament. And if the par-

Centre's reply

NEW DELHI, April 28: The government today submitted its reply to the Election Commission clarifying its stand on the OBC quota and making it clear that it had no intention of violating the model code of conduct. The reply was sent to the EC this evening. The commission has so far not studied the reply in detail and would discuss it in its full bench meeting. ■ SNS

ties choose to be silent, the Bill will have been passed without a fuss. The protest, therefore, was necessary," said Dr Ghatak.

"If a quota is decided on, we'll start a bigger agitation, involving all the medical colleges and uniting doctors and students in a single forum," said Dr Shoubhik Roy Chowdhury.

Resident doctors and interns resumed duties in Delhi hospitals today but medical students boycotted classes protesting against the proposed move to hike OBC quota in educational institutions.

"The situation at the hospital today is completely normal. All resident doc-

tors and interns have come back to work," Additional Medical Superintendent of LNJP Hospital Dr MS Chopra said.

The doctors were back on duty last night at the Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital, a senior administration official of the hospital said.

The resident doctors and interns had joined students in the agitation yesterday, observing a one-day token strike.

The students said they will continue to boycott classes and hold demonstrations "till the government comes clean" on the controversial reservation issue. "We are not politicians. We are students. Arjun Singh (Union HRD Minister) spoke to us as a politician and, in fact,

had nothing satisfactory to say on the issue. Our dilemma on the issue continues," said Sujit Sinha of Vardhaman Mahavir Medical College.

The students, who have threatened to launch a nationwide campaign if their demands were not met, gathered at the India Gate lawns to protest against the proposal to increase quota.

29 APR 2006

THE STATESMAN

Medical students threaten nationwide strike “in case Government goes back on its word”

Undergraduate students of five medical colleges to continue boycott of classes

Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI: Students from five leading medical colleges of Delhi on Thursday announced that they were calling off their agitation “partially”.

The decision came after Union Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh told them that he would talk to them after the upcoming May elections about initiating a debate on the proposed move to provide 27 per cent reservation to Other Backward Classes in Central universities and other institutions of higher learning.

National debate

“We have been assured by the HRD Minister that after the elections are over on May 11, he would initiate a national debate and also discuss the issue with the Prime Minister. We are calling off the agitation following the assurance. However, in case the Government goes back on its word, we will go on a nationwide strike,” warned a representative of the students, adding that a memorandum was also presented to the Union Minister during

the day demanding a rollback of the controversial proposal.

To keep up pressure

While work at all Delhi hospitals returned to normal thereafter, the undergraduate students of the five leading medical colleges have decided to continue boycotting classes to keep up the pressure on the Government.

The HRD Minister had called student representatives from the five colleges — Maulana Azad Medical College, Lady Hardinge Medical College, All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, University College of Medical Sciences and Vardhaman Mahavir Medical College — for a meeting on Thursday afternoon after the students assembled at India Gate to continue their agitation.

Clash with cops

A number of medical students demanding withdrawal of the proposed reservation for OBCs in admission to colleges had clashed with the police on Wednesday on Janpath and the police had to use tear gas and water cannons to disperse them as they tried to make their way to

the HRD Minister’s residence on Akbar Road.

Students get support

Students in the Capital had appealed to the students of other professional colleges across the country on Wednesday to join the agitation and had received support from medical colleges in Rohtak, Chandigarh, Patiala, Jaipur and Bangalore.

Support also came in from the Resident Doctors’ Associations and the Indian Medical Association who said that they would join the students in their agitation in case the Government did not resolve the matter amicably.

Work affected

Meanwhile, work at all the five hospitals in the Capital remained affected from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. with OPD services remaining suspended. Students also boycotted classes and undergraduate semester examinations were postponed at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, Maulana Azad Medical College and Lady Hardinge Medical College.



“RESPECT MERIT”: Medical students demonstrating under the banner of “Youth for Equality” at India Gate in Delhi on Thursday. — PHOTO: R. V. MOORTHY

Medicos meet Arjun Singh, suspend stir over OBC quota

Minister says he would speak to Manmohan before taking proposal to Cabinet



SORTING IT OUT: Union Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh meets representatives of medical students opposing the proposed quota for OBCs in Central Government institutions in New Delhi on Thursday. — PHOTO: RAJEEV BHATT.

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: "Pained" over the lathi-charge on medical students on Wednesday, Union Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh on Friday afternoon met a delegation of students from the capital's five medical colleges to hear their grievances and said he would talk to them on the issue of reservation for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) after the elections were over.

Though the students announced the suspension of their "anti-reservation" strike until the Assembly elections were over, Mr. Singh did not give them any assurance since the Election Commission's code of

conduct is operational.

Mr. Singh told the five-member student delegation that it was not for an individual to decide on the reservation but the entire Cabinet would take a decision that would be "well-reasoned and well-considered." He said no discussion on the issue was possible as he was bound by the Election Commission's directive not to speak on the matter. Mr. Singh said he would speak to the Prime Minister before taking the proposal to the Cabinet.

The 30-minute meeting came after Mr. Singh issued a statement saying that he was "pained by the news that a number of students of the medical colleges wanted to meet him but were

not allowed." He said his house was ever open to anybody who desired to come and meet him but there has to be some limitations on the numbers.

However, he made it clear that while the students wanted to interact about the reservation issue, he was not in a position to discuss the matter because of the directions of the Election Commission. "I have to maintain silence till the elections are over. Still, if anybody wants to meet me, I have no hesitation to meet them as may be requested," Mr. Singh said in his statement.

The student delegation that met Mr. Singh sought a rollback of the proposal for 27 per cent reservation for the OBCs in higher educational institutions

and a statement from the Government on Wednesday's lathi-charge. The students represented the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, Maulana Azad Medical College, Vardhman Mahavir Medical College, Lady Hardinge Medical College and the University College of Medical Sciences.

A large number of students were injured when police used water cannons and caned-charged them as they marched towards Mr. Singh's residence to protest against the reservation since they did not obtain prior permission.

See also Page 15

Reservation of jobs will lead to flight of labour: ADB

After so long, India has become a global player. Now why should we go back, asks ADB Chief Economist Ifzal Ali

9. October 2008
28/10
R.D. - 14

Special correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Asian Development Bank on Thursday warned that the move in India towards reservation of jobs in the private sector would prove counterproductive as it may lead to a flight of skilled labour and capital from the country.

Interacting with newsmen on the sidelines of a book release function here, ADB Chief Economist Ifzal Ali said: "After so long, India has become a global player. Now why should we go back? Reservation would prove counterproductive... The present high growth could swing back if it is not inclusive, as a political and social backlash would result in foreign capital leaving the shores of the country, with even domestic capital withdrawing."

Dr. Ali said: "The changed economic system in the era of globalisation demands that Indian companies must be one step ahead of their competitors and cope up with the forces unleashed by competition... We are living in a different world, our policies are circumscribed by what others do."

Dr. Ali went on to argue that if companies do not stay ahead of com-



Asian Development Bank Chief Economist Ifzal Ali (right) with economist Rana Hasan during the launch of the book 'Labour Market in Asia' in New Delhi on Thursday. - PHOTO: PTI

petition, skilled labour would move out. "We have seen this happening in the Philippines, where the middle class left the country," he said. In India's case, skilled labour moves swiftly between companies and from one region to the other, he said.

• Quota system in IITs, IIMs will fail to broaden employment

• RBI decision on full convertibility in the right direction

turning more efficient. "Attempts to impose reservation from outside would go against this spirit, forcing foreign firms to set up shop outside India and also a withdrawal of the production process by indigenous enterprises," he said.

On the issue of reservation for Other Backward Castes in professional institutions such as IITs and IIMs, Dr. Ali said such a quota system would fail to broaden employment as these institutes cover only a handful of people. Such talks are "red herring," when the issue, in fact, should have been to devise ways of raising productivity and increasing employment.

GDP growth may be scaled down

ADB has declared that it would have to scale down India's economic growth projections if international

crude oil prices continue to rule at \$70 a barrel.

"We will have to revise our projections downwards," Dr. Ali said, as surging oil prices were a matter of concern for India.

Economic growth

India's economic growth projection for this fiscal was based on oil prices at \$62 a barrel, and a \$10 rise in prices, as per an ADB study, would mean a 1.2 per cent reduction in its GDP growth, he said.

ADB had projected an overall growth of 7.6 per cent this fiscal and 7.8 per cent in 2007, slightly below the medium term rate of growth.

On full float of the rupee, Dr. Ali said the Reserve Bank's decision to appoint a committee was a step in the right direction.

"Unless rupee is made fully convertible, how is the country going to realise its dream of making Mumbai the financial capital of the region," he asked.

Full convertibility of the rupee, Dr. Ali maintained, could be a reality if the fiscal deficit of the Centre and the States is reduced to half.

"If that happens, India can steal a march over China," he said.

Question of Merit

Lalit Mohan

Students protesting quotas are late by a few thousand years. Caste based reservations have been the basis of our social order for most of our recorded history. The concern for merit is legitimate. However, it must be understood that when seats in institutes of higher learning are reserved for certain sections today, they will be filled not by a draw of lots, nor through nominations by influential political leaders, but by the same process of tests as is used for the general category. Except that in this case the eligibility will be restricted to SCs, STs and OBCs who comprise about 70 per cent of our population. Which means that around 49 per cent quota seats in higher education institutions are going to be filled by competition among a section of our society, which numbers over 700 million. Even if one per cent of this group reaches the qualification age every year, over seven million young people will be eligible to jostle for a few thousand reserved seats in these institutes. Is it possible that even among seven million people we cannot find a few thousand people of merit?

DEVIL'S
ADVOCATE

If this is so then obviously something is drastically wrong with our social order and it reinforces the general policy of reservations. It means that the handicap that these sections started with when India became free persist to this day. One reason for that is that the levers of power and influence remain in the hands of the so-called upper castes and they are loath to let those at the lower rungs come up and compete. The concern for merit thus becomes the most powerful argument for continuation of reservations, or their further extension. Even after candidates have secured admissions in the reserved quota, they will have to undergo the same rigorous training and pass the same tests as others, before they qualify for their degree. One question, however, would still need to be asked. Have we identified the backward classes correctly? The data that the Mandal Commission used pertained to the 1931 census. No caste enumeration has taken place subsequently. Even the Mandal survey is almost 30 years old. Much has changed since then. Should we not at least ascertain which are the genuinely backward classes, and what are their numbers, before the latest tranche of reservations comes into effect?

Without reservations

Reactions, overreaction to Arjun Singh's folly.
Middle class angst is getting out of hand

THE perils of Arjun Singh arrogating to himself the power to make policy announcements that should have had the stamp of the Union Cabinet's collective ownership continue to unfold. By blithely indicating that the Central government would facilitate a quota in educational institutions for students belonging to the Other Backward Classes, he has precipitated a series of confrontations. The faceoffs are significant: between members of the Cabinet itself, limiting the government's capacity to forge consensus a major social policy issue; between government and industry, with the resulting suspicion inhibiting public-private partnership; and between the government and sections of the student community, creating an absolutely needless paranoia about curtailed opportunities.

This week we have heard the Science and Technology Minister Kapil Sibal cautioning against any policy that could dilute the competitiveness of Indian companies and the excellence of R&D and educational institutions. Certainly, ministers joining debates in public makes for unedifying governance.

But the point is this. By working around preliminary discussions and Cabinet consultations, the HRD minister sought to dictate government policy and pre-empt any opposition. That is not the parliamentary way. It is, more importantly, a way guaranteed to tarnish a noble objective — of making opportunities accessible to the largest possible number of India's citizens — with flawed implementation. The country cannot, by the unilateral actions of one man, be spared the participatory debate that Cabinet meetings symbolise.

This has also compounded a wholly unwarranted fearfulness among students. Responsibility for that unease can be blamed on the HRD minister. But when medical students and resident doctors seek to strike work with nary a care about the consequences for patients, as they have at Delhi's elite institutions, they cannot be immune to charges of callousness. They can only be participants of this debate if they exhibit the sensitivity and responsibility expected of healthcare professionals. Arjun Singh's self-promotional follies can be no excuse for them.

অর্জুনের আশ্বাসেও অনড় ছাত্ররা

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৭ এপ্রিল: কাল তাঁর বাড়ির সামনে থেকে ডাক্তারি ছাত্রদের হটিয়ে দিয়েছিল পুলিশ। সারা দিনে একবারও মুখ খোলেননি তিনি।

অবশেষে আজ প্রতিবাদকারী ছাত্রদের কাছে ক্ষমা চাইলেন কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী অর্জুন সিংহ। কিন্তু যা নিয়ে এত কাণ্ড, নির্বাচন কমিশনের দেহাই দিয়ে সেই সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে তিনি মুখ খুললেন না। ছাত্রপ্রতিনিধিদের সঙ্গে বৈঠকে ফের বল ঠেললেন প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কোর্টে। অর্জুনের আশ্বাসে কাল ডাক্তাররা কাজে যোগ দেবেন বলে জানা গেলেও ছাত্রেরা ধর্মঘট চালিয়েই যাবে।

ছাত্রেরা মন্ত্রীর আশ্বাসের ভিত্তিতে আপাতত ১২ মে পর্যন্ত আন্দোলন স্থগিত রাখার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে বলে প্রথমে জানিয়ে দিলেও এতে তাঁদের একাংশ সন্তুষ্ট হয়নি। পরে বেশি রাতে জানা যায়, সতীর্থদের চাপে মত পাল্টে ধর্মঘট তোলার নিয়ে শর্ত চাপিয়েছেন ছাত্রপ্রতিনিধিরা। তা হল, অর্জুন সিংহ কিংবা প্রধানমন্ত্রী প্রকাশ্যে বা বৈদ্যুতিন মাধ্যমে বিবৃতি দিলে তবেই আন্দোলন স্থগিত হবে। নয়তো ক্লাস বয়কট চলবে।

তবে অর্জুন যতই দুঃখপ্রকাশ করুন, শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানে অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির জন্য সংরক্ষণের বিলটি নিয়ে এগোতে দৃঢ়প্রতিজ্ঞ কেন্দ্রীয় মানবসম্পদ উন্নয়ন মন্ত্রক। অবশ্য সুপ্রিম কোর্ট কেন্দ্রের অস্থিতি বাড়িয়ে আজ জানতে চেয়েছে, কোন কোন সংরক্ষিত গোষ্ঠীর প্রার্থীরা অসংরক্ষিত হিসেবে চাকরি পাচ্ছে, তার হিসেব কেন্দ্র বা রাজ্যগুলি রাখে কি না। প্রধান বিচারপতি ওয়াই কে সাভারওয়াল বলেন, “আমি নিশ্চিত, সংরক্ষণের তালিকা সংশোধনে জরুরি এই তথ্য কেন্দ্র বা রাজ্য রাখে না।” কোনও গোষ্ঠীর প্রতিনিধিত্ব যথেষ্ট থাকলে সেই গোষ্ঠী সংরক্ষণের তালিকা থেকে বাদ পড়তে পারে, এই সংক্রান্ত একটি মামলার রায় দিতে গিয়ে



মানছি না, মানব না। সঙ্কেতে বিহ্বল নন, প্রতিবাদে সরব দিল্লির মেডিক্যাল ছাত্রী। বৃহস্পতিবার। —এএফপি

সুপ্রিম কোর্ট আজ এ কথা জানিয়েছে। ছাত্রপ্রতিনিধিদের সঙ্গে বৈঠকে অর্জুন আজ বলেন, নির্বাচন কমিশনের নির্দেশ অনুযায়ী ভোট শেষের আগে সংরক্ষণ বিষয়ে তিনি মুখ খুলবেন না। কিন্তু নির্বাচন শেষ হলেই বিষয়টি নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে দেখা করবেন। তবে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর আপত্তি না থাকলে মন্ত্রিসভায় পেশ করার আগে সংরক্ষণের বিষয়টি নিয়ে ছাত্রদের সঙ্গে কথা বলবেন বলে অর্জুন আশ্বাস দেন। একই সঙ্গে গত কালের পুলিশি আচরণের জন্য দুঃখপ্রকাশ করেন কেন্দ্রীয় মানবসম্পদ উন্নয়নমন্ত্রী।

ছাত্রপ্রতিনিধিদের সঙ্গে কথায় তাঁর তরফে আপত্তি নেই জানিয়ে মন্ত্রী মন্তব্য করেন, “পঞ্চাশ বছরের

রাজনৈতিক জীবনে কারও জন্য দরজা বন্ধ করিনি।” মানবসম্পদ উন্নয়ন মন্ত্রক সূত্রের খবর, গত কালের ঘটনার প্রেক্ষিতে তাঁর বাড়ির সামনে থেকে পাহারা সরিয়ে নিতে দিল্লি পুলিশকে নির্দেশ দিয়েছেন অর্জুন। কমিশন অবশ্য আর অপেক্ষা করতে নারাজ। বিষয়টি নিয়ে ক্যাবিনেট সচিবকে কালকের মধ্যে কমিশনের সামনে জবাব পেশ করতে নির্দেশ দেওয়া হয়েছে। বারবার বিষয়টি পিছিয়ে দেওয়া হলেও ক্যাবিনেট সচিব ১ মে পর্যন্ত সময় চাইলে কমিশন সেই অনুরোধ খারিজ করে। সংরক্ষণ বিষয়ে ডাক্তারি ছাত্রেরা যে ভাবে রাস্তায় নেমে প্রতিবাদ দেখিয়েছেন, তাই নিয়ে এখনও সরগরম রাজধানী। সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে তাঁর মতভেদের

খবর নিছক জল্পনা বলে অর্জুন উড়িয়ে দেন। কপিল সিংবল অবশ্য প্রকাশ্যে এ জাতীয় সংরক্ষণের বিরোধিতা করেছেন। কাল জার্মানিতে হ্যানোভার প্রযুক্তি মেলায় কেন্দ্রীয় বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি মন্ত্রী সিংবল বলেন, বিশ্ব অর্থনীতিতে ভারতের অবস্থান ধাক্কা খায় এমন সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া অনুচিত। এশিয়ায় শ্রমবাজার সংক্রান্ত একটি বইয়ের উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে এসে এশীয় উন্নয়ন ব্যাঙ্কের প্রধান অর্থনীতিবিদ ইফজল আলিও বলেন, বেসরকারি ক্ষেত্রে চাকরি সংরক্ষণ বিশ্বে বিরূপ প্রতিক্রিয়া সৃষ্টি করবে। শুধু বাজারে পিছিয়ে পড়া নয়, এর ফলে দক্ষ শ্রমিকদের বাইরে চলে যাওয়ার হারও বাড়বে বলে তিনি মন্তব্য করেন।

Ministers have reservations on corporate sector quota

K.A. Badarinath
Hannover, April 26

SERIOUS DIFFERENCES in the government over reservations in specialised educational institutions and the corporate sector have spilled out at the Hannover Technology Fair.

First, it was commerce and industry minister Kamal Nath who hinted that his new industrial policy would obviate the need for reservations in the private sector.

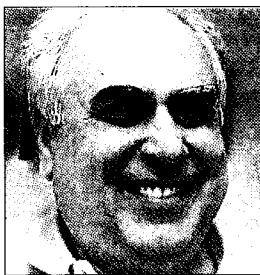
On Wednesday, it was science and technology minister Kapil Sibal who openly came out against HRD minister Arjun Singh's proposal to hike the reserved quota in IITs and IIMs to 49 per cent.

Sibal said emphatically that "nothing should be done that will dampen India's efforts to compete in the world markets".

"No policy should be taken which will dilute the levels of excellence in our research and development and educational institutions at a time when the western countries are looking at us for excellence. We should not do anything that will either deter or dampen our excellence in R&D," said Sibal.

Though IITs and IIMs do not come under the administrative control of Sibal, several projects in these institutions are supported directly and through international collaborations by Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, department of science and technology and department of biotechnology.

Sibal's statement comes close on the heels of Kamal Nath's statement that in six weeks his ministry will put forward an industrial policy before the cabinet that will chart out a new way to obviate the re-



Kapil Sibal (top) and Kamal Nath have their own take.

quirement for reservations.

Industry ministry sources said the new industrial policy will have no provision on reservations, but would definitely address the problems of unemployment and backwardness through subsidies and fiscal incentives.

Sibal also said he would pilot a bill in Parliament in the next session that provides for a revenue-sharing formula to share the income from royalties on innovations and patents by universities and researchers.

In order to promote international collaborations in specialised areas of research and development, the monetary incentives for researchers, institutes and supporting corporates have been mooted.

Also, he said the government planned to set up an Indian Institute of Intellectual Property Management in the country, on public-private partnership model where corporates, innovators and universities as well as the government will pitch in with funds. Two

more institutes — Indo-German Research and Technology Centre and Solar Research Centre — will also be set up.

The Indo-German Research Centre will have 30 per cent equity each from both German and Indian corporates while the respective governments will pitch in with 20 per cent equity each.

The research centre will be owned by a special purpose vehicle.

The minister also hinted that funds for research and development would be hiked to 2 per cent from the current 1.1 per cent. The Prime Minister's Office is favourably inclined to go ahead with the proposal, sources said.

27 APR 2006

Quota clash at Arjun door

OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 26: The quota debate has spilled on to the streets, the first clash breaking out in front of Arjun Singh's house and setting the stage for a strike in medical colleges.

Doctors and students of five teaching hospitals in the capital have decided to go on indefinite strike after police cracked down on their demonstration in front of Arjun's residence against increased reservation.

"We are going on an indefinite strike. We will meet representatives of all the teacher associations and the Indian Medical Association. The government has shown it does not want to listen to us," said

Aniruddh Lochan of the University College of Medical Sciences.

"At the moment, we will not involve doctors who are on regular duty, but all extra medical staff will be on strike." The strike, he added, will not affect emergency services.

Officials said Arjun's human resource development ministry is determined to go ahead with the proposal to set aside 27 per cent seats for Other Backward Class students in educational institutions, including IIMs, IITs and medical colleges. (See Page 6)

The trouble started early this morning when students from AIIMS, Maulana Azad Medical College, Lady Hardinge Medical College, Univer-

sity College of Medical Sciences and Vardhman Medical College began gathering under the banner of Youth For Equality.

They assembled outside Arjun's 17 Akbar Road residence, close to 10 Janpath, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi's house.

"It was a peaceful march. But the police came with lathis and beat us. It was not even the women police. They just caught hold of our hands and legs and dumped us into the (police) bus," said Shweta Sardana of Lady Hardinge Medical College.

Sardana said the police, which had been informed about the protest in advance, came to the "hostels" last night to stop students from joining

the march. At AIIMS, the police lathicharged students when they began to gather for the march early this morning," she added.

"We went to the minister's residence but he has refused to meet us," fumed Lochan. "We are now mobilising colleges and a hospital strike. We will not hurt the people. But this strike is in reaction to how the police were treating us."

"The quota is going to lower the standards of the medical profession," Sardana said.

Deputy commissioner of police Anand Mohan said the students were removed because they were protesting in a "restricted" area. "We asked them several times to take their protest to Jantar Mantar but they did not."

Medics in Mandal re-run

Statesman News Service *Sri*

NEW DELHI, April 26: It was a throw-back to 1990 when students stormed the Capital in protest against the decision to implement the Mandal Commission recommendations. Today, students of five medical colleges demonstrated against HRD minister Mr Arjun Singh's proposal of 27 per cent reservation for OBCs in elite institutions.

The protest turned violent as Delhi Police lobbed tear-gas shells and used water cannons to disperse several hundred students, injuring many. Police used force when at least 500 agitators were moving from the scheduled venue of protest at Jantar Mantar triggering a scuffle between the two sides.

The protesters said the political parties had been working with an eye to votes and threatened to go on



Medical students clash with police in New Delhi on Wednesday. ■ AFP

strike if the proposed reservation was not rolled back. The students were protesting under the banner of "Youth for Equality".

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Aniruddha Lochan, a student of AIIMS and convener of "Youth For Equality", said: "Police hijacked our bus and manhandled the students. They misbehaved with some girl students who were slapped and beaten up. A girl student has received serious injuries and there were no police-women."

Tanya Sehgal, a student of Maulana Azad Medical College, said: "We never expected them to lob tear-gas shells. Some of them pushed girl students and misbehaved with them."

Most students felt politicians were eyeing their vote-banks. "Not one party opposed the proposal in Parliament," said Supriya Gupta, president of the students' body, Lady Hardinge Medical College. The students contend that an increase in quota will compromise the quality of health professionals. They have decided to boycott classes from tomorrow.

New Supreme Court interim order on SC/ST quota

Reservation for admission to PG medical courses this year

Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court has ordered that 10 per cent of the State-wise Central quota be reserved for Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe candidates in postgraduate medical admissions for the academic year 2006-2007.

The ongoing counselling should be held only for the rest of the seats, ruled a three-judge Bench of the Court comprising Justice K. G. Balakrishnan, Justice A. R. Lakshmanan and Justice S. H. Kapadia.

It passed the interim order on a writ petition filed by 14 doctors challenging the method of calculation of seats reserved for the SCs/STs.

The petitioners contended that as per the apex court verdict 50 per cent of the postgraduate

• **Ongoing counselling only for rest of the seats**

• **Seat calculation at variance with Court judgment: petitioners**

medical seats were reserved under the all-India quota and 50 per cent under the State quota. The judgment made it clear that the 50 per cent all-India quota would be calculated after deducting the number of seats set apart for the reserved categories.

(For example, if there are 100 seats, the seats meant for the SCs/STs will be deducted and the remaining seats divided into the 50 per cent all-India quota and 50 per cent Central quota.)

Contrary to this judgment, the admission bulletin this year said

the SC/ST quota would be calculated at the 50 per cent seats available after deducting the 50 per cent all-India quota. As a result, the number of seats reserved for SCs/STs came down, the petitioners said.

They sought a declaration that such a calculation was invalid and unconstitutional and urged provision of reservation in keeping with the Court judgment.

The Bench said that as per the earlier judgment the quota was increased to 50 per cent.

"Now the question is whether a reservation of 22.5 per cent is to be made in the State quota or in the Central quota. We direct that the 10 per cent, subject-wise Central quota be reserved subject to the final decision."

27 APR 2006

EC asks govt to defer quota Bill

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Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 22. — In the wake of the raging controversy sparked off by the Union HRD minister, Mr Arjun Singh's proposal for 27 per cent reservation for OBCs in Central universities and higher educational institutions, the Election Commission has now asked the Centre to defer any consideration of the draft Bill for this purpose by the Union Cabinet until the completion of the ongoing Assembly polls.

"The Commission has conveyed its opinion to the HRD ministry that it will be desirable to defer consideration of the Bill by the Cabinet till the election process in five states are over", the deputy election commissioner, Mr R Bhattacharya, told media persons when asked about the Cabinet note relating to the OBCs quota proposal sent by the HRD ministry for its consideration several weeks ago.

The Cabinet Secretary had reportedly since returned the draft legislation to the HRD ministry on the same ground that its consideration at this stage might violate the EC's model code of conduct that has been in force owing to the continuing elections.

The commission had earlier taken umbrage to the reported declaration

of Mr Arjun Singh on the reservation proposal for OBCs in the Central universities and Centre-aided institutions like IITs and IIMs.

The draft Bill — SCs, STs and Socially and Educationally Backward Classes of Citizens (reservation of seats in educational institutions) Bill, 2006 — seeks to provide reservation of seats in educational institutions established by the Central government.

The EC had first issued a notice to the Centre asking for Mr Arjun Singh's explanation on his proposal which was found to be a "prima facie" case of contravention of model code of conduct by the former. The HRD minister sent a tough reply to the EC, denying all charges. The EC then sent another notice asking for clarifications from Mr Singh on his reply.

On the clarifications sent by Mr Singh, Mr Bhattacharya said that since the reply was in part, the Commission has extended the time till April 24 for a complete reply.

The HRD minister had earlier sought the video footage concerning his reported announcement of the OBC reservation proposal from the EC over the clarifications sought from him. After watching the video footage sent by the EC, he sent his clarifications.

অপ্রয়োজনীয় সংরক্ষণ

ভারতীয় রাজনীতির বেশ কিছু দিকটি রহিয়াছে, তাহাদের অন্যতম অপেক্ষাকৃত অনগ্রসর জনগোষ্ঠীর জন্য সংরক্ষণ। স্বাধীন রাষ্ট্রের সংবিধানে তফসিলি জাতি এবং জনজাতিভুক্ত মানুষদের জন্য সংরক্ষণের সুবিধা রাখা হইয়াছিল। কারণ যে জনজাতির মানুষরা ঐতিহাসিক ভাবে পিছাইয়া আছেন, তাহাদের সমাজের মূলধারায় আনিতে হইলে কিছু সুবিধা দেওয়া আবশ্যিক। বলা হইয়াছিল, এই সংরক্ষণ ব্যবস্থা সাময়িক। কিন্তু ক্রমে সংরক্ষণ দীর্ঘস্থায়ী হয়। রাজনীতিকরা বিভিন্ন সময়ে আপন রাজনৈতিক স্বার্থে সংরক্ষণের অস্ত্রটি ব্যবহার করিয়াছেন, তা সে অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির ভোট কুক্ষিগত করিবার জন্যই হউক বা সামাজিক ভাবমূর্তি উজ্জ্বলতর করিবার জন্যই হউক। সম্প্রতি প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ একটি বণিক সভার সম্মেলনে ভাষণ দিবার সময় শিল্পপতিদের অনুরোধ করেন, তাহারা যেন বেসরকারি ক্ষেত্রে কর্মী নিয়োগের সময় অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির কথা স্মরণে রাখেন। প্রসঙ্গত, কয়েক দিন পূর্বেই কেন্দ্রীয় ন্যায় ও ক্ষমতায়ন দফতরের মন্ত্রী মীরা কুমার জানাইয়াছিলেন, সরকার বেসরকারি ক্ষেত্রেও সংরক্ষণ প্রথা চালু করিবার কথা ভাবিতেছে। রাজনীতির কথা সরাইয়া রাখিলে বুঝিতে কষ্ট হয় না, একমাত্র প্রাথমিক শিক্ষার মতো ক্ষেত্র ব্যতীত অন্য সকল ক্ষেত্রে সংরক্ষণ কেবলমাত্র অপ্রয়োজনীয়ই নহে, কুশলতার পথে প্রতিবন্ধকও বটে। ভারতে বাজার ব্যবস্থা ক্রমে সাবালক হইয়া উঠিতেছে, বর্তমানে এক জন নিয়োগকর্তা তাহার প্রয়োজন অনুসারে শ্রম-বাজার হইতে কর্মী সংগ্রহ করিতে পারেন। এ ক্ষেত্রে একমাত্র বিবেচনা নিয়োগকর্তার চাহিদা এবং প্রার্থীর যোগ্যতার সামঞ্জস্য। অন্য কোনও বিষয় বিবেচিত হইলে তাহা প্রক্রিয়াটির কুশলতা হানি করে, বাজার ব্যবস্থা অদক্ষ হইয়া পড়ে। এই সত্য অর্থনীতিবিদ মনমোহন সিংহের অজ্ঞাত নহে। কিন্তু তিনি বেসুর গাহিতেছেন, প্রকারান্তরে বেসরকারি উদ্যোগীদের সংরক্ষণ চালু করিবার পরামর্শ দিতেছেন।

ইহা অন্যায়। বেসরকারি উদ্যোগীরা কোন নীতি লইয়া চলিবেন তাহা তাহাদেরই বিবেচ্য। কর্মী নিয়োগের বিষয়ে তাহাদের অযাচিত উপদেশ দেওয়া সরকারের অনুচিত। সরকারের স্মরণে রাখা উচিত, তাহার কাজ বেসরকারি উদ্যোগের জন্য বিনিয়োগের অনুকূল সামাজিক ও বাহ্যিক পরিকাঠামো গড়িয়া তোলা; বিনিয়োগকারীরা যাহাতে অসুবিধার সম্মুখীন না হন, তাহা সুনিশ্চিত করা। কোনও বেসরকারি সংস্থা কী উপায়ে চলিবে, সে বিষয়ে মাথা না ঘামাইলেই সরকারের মঙ্গল। কিন্তু দীর্ঘ দিনের কু-অভ্যাস যাইবে কোথায়? ভারতে মাত্রাতিরিক্ত সরকারি নিয়ন্ত্রণের জমানা হইতেই 'দেশে যাহা কিছু ঘটিবে, তাহারই নৈতিক অভিভাবক স্ব সরকারের', এমন একটি বিশ্বাস সরকারি মানসিকতায় প্রোথিত হইয়া আছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বর্তমান বক্তব্যটিও সেই মানসিকতার ফল। সরকারকে বুঝিতে হইবে, অনর্থক কর্তৃত্বের দিন গিয়াছে, এই বিশ্বাসিত সময়ে আপন অধিকারের সীমায় থাকাই সরকারের পক্ষে শুভ। তবে, এই ঘটনায় যাহা সর্বাধিক আক্ষেপের, তাহা হইল, বক্তার নাম মনমোহন সিংহ। যিনি ভারতে উদার অর্থনীতির প্রথম প্রবক্তা, তিনি এমন বেসুরে গাহিলে বোঝা যায়, ভোটের রাজনীতি বড় বিষম বস্তু।

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বক্তব্যটি আরও মৌলিক কারণে অন্যায়। বিনিয়োগকারীদের যথার্থ লক্ষ্য বিনিয়োগ হইতে সর্বাধিক মুনাফা অর্জন। সেই অভীষ্ট পূরণে যাহা প্রয়োজন, তাহারা সেই সিদ্ধান্তই লইবেন, অন্য কোনও বিষয়ে তাহাদের চিন্তিত হইবার কারণ নাই। বিনিয়োগকারীরা প্রত্যেকে আপন লক্ষ্য স্থির থাকিলে অর্থনীতির 'অদৃশ্য হাত' স্থিতিশীলতা সুনিশ্চিত করে। ইহাই অর্থশাস্ত্রের প্রথম পাঠ। এই লক্ষ্য সম্মুখে রাখিয়া বিনিয়োগকারীরা যদি বিবেচনা করেন, অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির জন্য বিশেষ সুবিধা বা এমনকী সংরক্ষণ জরুরি, তাহা হইলে তাহারা তেমন ব্যবস্থা করিবেন। নচেৎ নয়। কোনও ব্যাপার মুখেই বিনিয়োগকারীদের নাস্তি স্বীকার করা উচিত নয়। তাহাদের স্মরণে রাখিতে হইবে, ভারতের অর্থনৈতিক উন্নতি বহুলাংশে শিল্পক্ষেত্রে উৎপাদনশীলতা এবং কুশলতার উপর নির্ভরশীল। তাহারা এ প্রক্ষে সমঝোতা করিলে তাহা দেশের অর্থনৈতিক স্বাস্থ্যের সহিত বিশ্বাসঘাতকতা হইবে।

CII against mandatory quota

Sets up task force to empower disadvantaged sections

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: With pro and anti reservation lobbies getting vocal and aggressive and the debate on the issue virtually taking the centre stage, the Confederation of Indian Industry like other apex chambers on Thursday came out openly against mandatory job reservation in the private sector for the socially underprivileged sections.

At the same time in a somewhat conciliatory gesture it announced a task force to recommend affirmative action for the weaker classes.

Announcing constitution of the Task Force for Affirmative Action, obviously to pave the way for avoiding an immediate

clash between the two lobbies, new CII chief R. Seshasayee at his first press conference strongly objected to mandatory reservation of jobs saying that it was not acceptable to industry.

"Mandatory reservation in any form is not conducive to competitiveness of industry. It is not acceptable," Mr. Seshasayee declared.

"To ensure that SCs, STs and OBCs are able to compete and acquire job skills and as our response to the government's call for reservation in the private sector, we are setting up a task force on affirmative action under the chairmanship of J.J. Irani," said Mr. Seshasayee who is also the Managing Director of Ashok Leyland.

Asked if the government will bring in legislation making reservation mandatory, he said: "I do think the government will be responsive to a dialogue. We are committed for positive action. I do not think legislation is a solution. If there is a law you have to abide by it."

Focusing on the kind problems that the business would face if legislation were introduced, Mr. Seshasayee said: "We are an externally engaged economy. We have many global companies here. If such a law is brought in these MNCs might say why should we set shop here and they will move out. If the legislation is only for domestic industry even then it will be detrimental."

Quota Obsession

50 per cent reservation is much too high

By RAJEEV DHAVAN

The Union government's new found policy of quotas in professional institutions smacks of vote-gathering populism, claims to fulfil social equality and threatens caste tensions in the name of justice. No one can doubt the importance of social equality to Indian governance. Affirmative action is a constitutionally ordained part of Indian governance. The equality of the Constitution has little value if it cannot (a) prevent discrimination and (b) help the disadvantaged through affirmative action. The two key areas of equal opportunity in India relate to education and public employment. In both areas, populism has taken over.

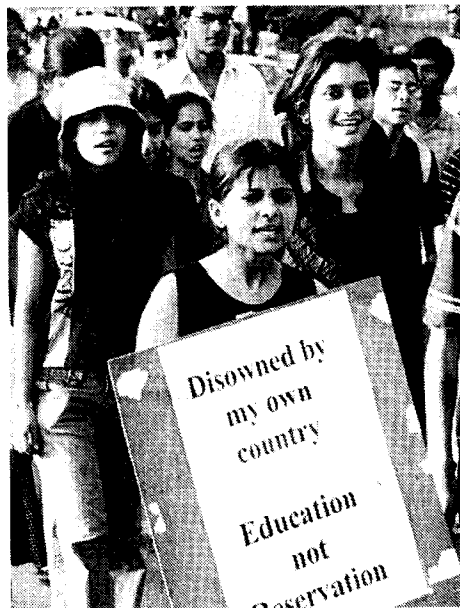
Affirmative action was in the original Constitution of 1950 and affirmed for education by the first amendment of 1951. But affirmative action does not consist of quotas alone. It consists of a whole range of supportive activities at primary and other levels, extra help, scholarships and social benefits. No doubt quotas are a part of affirmative action. In 1963, the Supreme Court in Balaji's case fixed a limit of 50 per cent for education, which was adopted by the Mandal case (1992) for public employment. But, even though a 50 per cent quota is permitted, we should remember that quotas are not mandatory and that 50 per cent is a maximal limit. It is not necessary to compulsively move towards 50 per cent, still less so as a political gimmick without sufficient reflection.

Just as the American Constitution is not race blind, India's Constitution is not caste blind. That controversy is over. The Supreme Court rightly decided that caste could be a consideration for defining backwardness. To the extent that this might entail some tension between the 'forward' and 'backward' castes or groups, India's polity will simply have to grin and bear it. Indeed, in the Mandal riots of 1990-92, the tension became unjustifiably volatile and hostile. But there is a lesson to be learnt from it.

Faced with the worst form of endemic

racism, the American supreme court in the Michigan cases (2003) has virtually ended quotas but affirmed other narrowly tailored affirmative action. The Indian debate has gone in the reverse direction. All other forms of affirmative action have been marginalised. Those policies are in disarray. Corruption haunts other forms of affirmative action expenditure. There is an obsession with quotas.

India is committed to some system of quotas in both education and public employment. The question is for whom, how and to what extent. Firstly, where seats are limited,



the 'for whom' question remains important. If a preference is called for, the primary beneficiaries have to be SC and ST over the other backward classes (OBCs) even though both form large vote banks. Indeed, Justice Krishna Iyer rightly spoke of a super-classification amongst the backward classes — enabling preference for SC and ST as preferred beneficiaries. So far, in relation to IITs, IIMs and other government institutions, the Centre followed this super-classification by restricting quotas to SCs and STs. Its decision to extend quota benefits to OBCs is pure and simple politics. OBCs should be

allowed other benefits other than quotas.

Secondly, the 'how' question remains important. Apart from supportive programmes other than quotas, there is tendency to lower eligibility standards for quota candidates. In Preeti's case (1999), the Supreme Court noted how quota candidates were sought to be permitted in one state even if they got zero in eligibility tests! Quota-based affirmative action combines efficiency with justice only if the two competing candidates are more or less equal. In such a case, preference is given to the quota candidates without compromising standards or competence. The possible combination of quota and incompetent eligibility is lethal.

Thirdly, the 50 per cent limit cannot be stretched to its outer limits. Within the outer limits are also preferences for residence, institutions, political sufferers, disabled and others. The 50 per cent limit is already overcrowded. Quotas are an annual affair. They are as much an opportunity for merit as for quota candidates. The idea of reservations is to advance the disadvantaged. It is not to punish merit candidates — many of whom could be equally poor. One girl from Bangalore ruefully described future admissions as a race in which the quota candidates are already at the winning post. Fifty per cent is too high and too inequalitarian. Even if OBCs are within quotas, the overall reservation should not be more than 20 per cent. But is the government prepared to scale down SC and ST quotas to benefit the OBCs? At present, there is no discerning policy. There is only a general vote-gathering largesse showing little application of mind.

Fourthly, there is the question of the creamy layer of all groups who sponge the quota. The creamy layer should be excluded for both SCs and STs as well as OBCs. Finally, there are financial fees adjustments to be made if 50 per cent of all admissions cannot pay normal fees to meet even the annual revenue expenditure. This is a matter of concern that cannot be ignored.

So far, Arjun Singh has limited himself to government institutions. The 93rd Amendment (2005) will also include quotas in private institutions. This is a practice run for serious problems that loom ahead.

The writer is a senior Supreme Court advocate.

15 APR 2006

CPI(M)'s call to parties on reservation in education

AD. 12/9. Caran & Benji

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Communist Party of India (Marxist), supporting reservation in education, has suggested that parties that supported the 93rd Constitution Amendment work to get public approval for the policy.

Reacting to the outcry in a section of society and criticising the bourgeois media, the party cautioned that whipping up of caste passions would create a deep division in society.

Strangely, when reservation in jobs was announced in 1990, the outcry of opposition to it also came in the form of suggesting that reservation should first be made in education, so that these sections are equipped to fill the quota of reservation in jobs. That the same sections

Indians through virtually an auction process. The highest bidder wins. The complete absence of any consideration of merit in these cases is never questioned. Merit, however, becomes an issue when it comes to providing access to those who for centuries have been denied education".

While pointing out that reservation remained a contentious issue, rousing frenzied passions, the editorial said if education for all could be provided, then the issue of reservation would cease to be a bone of contention.

Until this is achieved, it was necessary to understand that education in the country has, for long, particularly since Independence, been afflicted with the perennial quest to seek a proper balance in its eternal

triangle - quantity, quality, equity. While reservation definitely addressed the issue of equity, the issue of both quality and quantity also need to be addressed. There was an urgent need to expand State-run educational facilities in order to address the problem of quantity, while simultaneously increasing expenditures for providing high-class educational infrastructure to tackle quality. However, equity cannot be kept in abeyance until this balance is brought about in this eternal triangle. Quantity, quality and equity complement each other and were not in conflict, as vested interests seek to deliberately project.

The editorial said achieving proper balance between quantity, quality and equity in education assumed greater importance.

- **Reservation continues to remain a contentious issue, rousing frenzied passions**
- **Issue of quality and quantity also need to be addressed**

today oppose reservation in education speaks volumes of their inherent upper-caste bias," an editorial in the latest issue of party organ *People's Democracy* said.

Arguing that the system of capitation fee in a large number of private institutions was a reservation for the rich, it said: the only merit involved in this scheme is that of having enough money to literally buy admission. In some cases (quite large in number), private institutions offer seats to Non-Resident

QUOTAS ■ 2 Joint-Secy level officers disagreed with rationale, NAC members say focus on primary education, not this

Divided over Bill: NAC, even HRD officials

98-3
159A

SHUBHAJIT ROY

NEW DELHI, APRIL 14

THERE is a divide within the establishment on the issue of imposing 27% quota for OBCs—even within Arjun Singh's Human Resource and Development Ministry.

Sources told *The Indian Express* that two of six Joint Secretary-level officers in the ministry's department of secondary and higher education "dissented" against Arjun Singh's move to impose OBC quotas in Central institutions.

These bureaucrats, it is learnt, cited two, now widely discussed arguments: First, whether the amendment "automatically" leads to OBC quotas in institutions of excellence, like IIMs and IITs. And second, what effect it would have on academic standards in institutions of excellence.

The Minister, however, didn't make much of this dissent, and asked officials to prepare the draft Cabinet note. One of the dissenting bureaucrats told *The Indian Express*: "We raised objections on this issue but a majority thought they could pull it off. And the minister was not ready to relent as well."

This rift finds an echo not



Students on their way to Rashtrapati Bhavan to submit a memorandum to President A.P. J. Abdul against the reservation issue. PTI photo

only in the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) but the National Advisory Council (NAC) too.

Former Vice Chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru Technical University D Swaminadhan, an NAC member, who has been a member of Planning Commission told *The Indian Express*: "There cannot be a blanket reservation...we have to have minimum merit requirements. The under-privileged groups have to be looked after, but at the same time, standards have to be maintained...they can't be diluted."

Another NAC member and national coordinator of Lok Satta, a Hyderabad-based NGO working towards governance reforms, Jaiprakash Narayan said, "The manner in which quota is implemented needs to be carefully thought out. In case of IIMs and IITs, instead of a quota, there should be differential benchmarks for the General category and the underprivileged. For example, if the minimum marks for General students is 100, it could be 90 or 80 for the backward communities. This will guarantee

a minimum standard."

Besides, Narayan said: "Intensive coaching programmes at state cost for two years needs to be imparted to students from these groups. And lastly, schools should be overhauled. One must replace competitive populism and lazy policymaking with cool reflection and imaginative solutions."

Another NAC member, who did not wish to be named, said: "Focus on primary and secondary education is more important than quota in centres of excellence, like IIMs and IITs."

In case of NKC, its convenor Pratap Bhanu Mehta had written a protest e-mail to its members a day after Arjun's announcement. The NKC reports directly to the PM and advises him on education-related matters.

NKC chairman Sam Pitroda warned of long-term implications and asked for more debate and discussion on the issue. In fact, NKC will meet by early May to prepare a paper on the subject.

However, NKC member Jayati Ghosh, JNU's head of Economics department, dissented against convenor Mehta's proposal to intervene and oppose quota system. She is said to have been by other members as well.

INDIAN EXPRESS

Caste Republics

By SWAGATO GANGULY

THE more reservation fails to deliver social justice, the stronger becomes political parties' determination to push it into newer areas. Human resource minister Arjun Singh has taken aim at IITs and IIMs, hoping to set aside 50 per cent of seats in supposedly elite institutions for reserved categories. The fun part is that one can always identify areas of life that aren't reserved, and therefore to blame for the failure of social justice. For example, one could progressively — pun fully intended — set aside 50 per cent of all IIT/IIM faculty posts for reserved categories, then 50 per cent of all seats in all educational institutions, then 50 per cent of all private sector jobs, and so on. Why not push this logic only a little further, and cut through the Gordian knot for a fair and equitable solution that ought to be to everyone's satisfaction?

The solution would be to set aside enclaves within India for each caste grouping, the size of the territory being roughly proportionate to that group's numbers within the overall population. The Brahmin Indian republic could conclude treaties of non-aggression with the OBC Indian republic and the Dalit Indian republic, and otherwise keep within its borders. While the republics would be free to have trade agreements between themselves and be generally incorporated into the SAARC structure, movements of population would be strictly regulated. Getting visas to go from the Brahmin Indian republic to the Dalit Indian republic, and vice versa, ought to be about as tough as travelling from India to Pakistan and meeting General Musharraf is now. The Brahmin Indian republic would abolish reservations, and Infosys and Wipro could relocate here instead of shipping to China. The Dalit Indian republic would have no oppressors (except their own leaders) — NGOs, social justice-wallahs and Arundhati Roy could relocate here. In the OBC Indian republic, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Lalu Prasad could live in idyllic communion. They could even come to an agreement to alternate as president of the republic, and unlike the wily British Brahmins Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, actually keep to the terms of this contract. Simple and elegant, and takes care of everybody's problem.

DEVIL'S
ADVOCATE

EC sends fresh quota query



Arjun: More questions

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 12: Not satisfied with human resource development minister Arjun Singh's reply on the government's quota move, the Election Commission today sought some clarifications on reservation for OBC students in elite educational institutions.

According to sources, the fresh clarifications that the commission has sought are technical in nature.

The poll body found a mismatch between Singh's reply on Sunday and the version that appeared in newspapers the next day, sources said, adding that the commission has, therefore, sought to know

which is the correct version.

The Election Commission today sent a communication in this regard to cabinet secretary B.K. Chaturvedi, asking him to obtain the government's clarification and forward it to the commission by April 18.

It had earlier said the HRD minister had prima facie violated the model code of conduct for elections by announcing plans for reservation.

In his reply to the poll panel, Arjun Singh had said: "There was no announcement of any concession or any breach of the model code of conduct."

A decision of the central government with regard to percentage of reservation of

seats was yet to be taken, the minister had told the commission.

Backing Arjun, the Congress today sought to douse the controversy, saying no government decision has been taken and what had taken place were mere "inter-ministerial proposals".

"We have not reached a stage where it can be called a government decision. What was reported were mere exchanges of inter-ministerial proposals," Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi told reporters. He said there was no need for the Congress to take a stand as all parties had given their opinion when the matter was debated in Parliament last year.

Arjun's OBC quota gambit may backfire

g. Caste & Y.K.R.

Congress' Hunt For New Loyalists May Alienate Old Backers Like The Upper Castes

By Rajeev Deshpande/TNN

New Delhi: HRD minister Arjun Singh may have bought himself some political breathing space with his OBC gambit, but if Congress strategists hope to reap a political windfall, their expectations may well end in disappointment. The shot may miss its target by a mile.

The avowed objective of the proposal to level the playing field for socially backward sections is seen positively enough by party MPs. But apart from correcting Congress' image of being a laggard in wooing OBCs, benefits are seen to be at a perceptual level rather than actual.

To start with, in south India, OBC quotas already exist at state-level college and higher educational institutions. MPs from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka from both general and OBC categories feel that Centre's proposal is not going to mark new ground.

And if Congress bigwigs felt that Singh's plans could dent OBC fortresses commanded by leaders like Mulayam Singh Yadav and Lalu Prasad, party MPs are somewhat sceptical over such a dividend accruing to the party. They argue that all that is left of Congress' once impressive votebank in UP and Bihar are a smattering of upper castes.

By seeking to extend OBC quotas to Central



Students protest against the government's reservation policy in New Delhi on Tuesday

universities, Congress has irked the very segments that support the party. The upper castes may move towards Mayawati who will be seen as the only credible anti-Mulayam force, said an MP from UP. And all this without Congress grabbing the OBC pie from SP.

Some Delhi leaders felt that upper caste urban voters are bound to be provoked by Arjun Singh's proposals. This could result in a situation where urban voters, already annoyed with the party's failures on the civic front, eye alternatives like BJP.

Whether quotas would swing well-off OBCs, either rural or even urban middle class, towards Congress is difficult to estimate. OBC polarisation seems an ambitious plan as there are far too many regional variations. If the Hindi belt is the consideration, both SP and BSP are set to remain primary political forces, an MP who has dealt with UP affairs said.

In the circumstances, Congress may not be in a position to attract the non-Yadav most backwards castes who have chafed under SP rule. These castes may also view BSP as a better option. The quotas should have been aimed at MBCs, argued an MP from Andhra. But differentiating the OBC quota is not easy. Opposition to the proposal to extend reservations to universities and elite institutions like IIMs and IITs, has brought out a combative streak in OBC MPs. "Why should there be a creamy layer? Maybe upper caste students from well-off families should opt for private colleges," a Karnataka MP countered.

Some MPs did feel that the proposed quotas may see dominant OBC castes corner benefits. "Those who need quotas may not access them," said a Rajasthan MP who also did not see the issue impacting on the state's political map.

The Thakur from Madhya Pradesh may well have made new enemies for the Congress without adding any friends.

Lessons from the new intolerance

Harish Khare

THESE LAST few days have witnessed a fascinating battle for the control of the public discourse. A handful of newspapers and a couple of English language television channels have done their best to stoke a 1990-type hysteria over the proposed new reservation regime in Central educational institutions. Television crews have been despatched to find voices of "merit" that are aghast at the very idea that institutes of management, presumed bastion of merit and competition, are now sought to be pried open to admit children of the lesser gods. Captains of industry are on record as to how a few hundred seats in management schools will erode India's competitiveness in this age of globalisation.

A twist has been given to the controversy by casting Union Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh as the villain of the piece. All this in the belief that if enough hype is created, the decent man, Manmohan Singh, will intervene and put an end to this "mischief" afoot. Even the nice and sincere gentlemen in

Whether or not the IIMs and IITs are forced to open their doors a little wider, the new fashionable intolerance exhibited in these last few days should be a sobering experience for all of us.

against the reservation regime. Those self-immolations were all paid for by a cynical political party. The V.P. Singh Government had to go not because of the anti-Mandal agitation but because of the intractable intrigues within the Janata Dal. But in popular historical perception, "Mandal" is deemed the cause of Mr. Singh's downfall. Two years later, the same Congress took credit for implementing the Mandal scheme.

2006 is not 1990. The Mandal initiative has helped to change the face of the Indian polity and society. The grammar of entitlement has become part of the language of Indian politics. There can be a debate on how to go about it but all political parties accept the logic and reality of the Constitution (93rd Amendment) Act, 2005. As and when the Human Resource Development Ministry comes up with a Bill commensurate with the 93rd Amendment, Parliament and the country will get to debate the issue anew.

But the 2006 controversy has only reminded one and all of how entrenched social prejudices remain and how deep runs the hostility to change in areas where it matters the most. Suddenly it seems fashionable to speak of "them" who now dare want to enter the holy portals of management and technology institutes.

All political systems witness a continuous struggle over societal resources, according to the

accepted rules of the game. In India these rules are prescribed in the Constitution but are always reinterpreted according to the distribution of power. As it were, power — political and electoral — has passed into the hands of the less socially and educationally advanced groups. And it is only a matter of time before the logic of democracy and numbers asserts itself in every sphere of social activity.

Today it is the IIMs and IITs that are sought to meet the demands of social justice, tomorrow it will be the private sector that will be called upon to broad-base its mostly caste-based personnel structures. Those who demand and get, and prosper from the state's protection cannot remain oblivious to its obligation to engineer some kind of equity.

The crux of our present day dilemma was foreseen many years ago by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. In the last sitting of the Constituent Assembly, he noted: "We are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics, we will be recognising the principle of one man-one vote and one vote-one value. In our social and economic life, we shall by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man-one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to

deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earlier possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this assembly has so laboriously built up."

Dr. Ambedkar, social justice, egalitarianism, and equity seem obsolete to the influential sections of the Indian society. Our discourse-manufacturers have worked themselves into a comfortable delusion that the "market" has made India a vast level-playing field and therefore any suggestion of any kind of affirmative action is a violation of some sacred mantra. "Reservation" is deemed one of those devious stratagems these undesirable politicians are forever devising just to keep themselves in power. It is taken as an affront to a new India that thinks of itself as a partner in a cosmopolitan march to prosperity. The unstated claim is that the market has cured India of all its social inequalities and inequities.

Power of the market

The assumption is that the 300-million strong consumerist middle class has sorted out its caste stratifications and is now uniformly and unambiguously worshipping on the altar of merit and competence. The curative power of market has melted away social distinctions and disadvantages. Politics and politicians have failed India and they should not be allowed to dispel the market magic. This middle class, the assumption goes, is capable of propelling India into becoming a super economic power and is smart enough to engage with the global economy on competitive terms. In any case, this middle class need not be hobbled by the burden of the rest of the 700 million and their deprivations.

In the midst of the market euphoria, there is a strong reluctance to see, let alone acknowledge, inequalities. Take for instance the controversy a few months ago over the so-called "Muslim headcount" in the armed forces. The voices that raised a din on the Muslim headcount are, more or less, the same kicking up a shindy on "reservation." Last year, for example, only 11 Muslim candidates could make the grade out of the 422 men and women selected for the IAS, IFS, IPS and other Central services. Of these 11, eight made it in the category of Other Backward Classes (OBC). No one wants to acknowledge the near-systemic marginalisation of the largest minority in the country. Yet any attempt to even catalogue discrimination and disadvantages faced by the minorities is immediately dubbed anti-merit, anti-progress, and anti-national. As long as a problem is not acknowledged, there will be no obligation to find a solution.

But precisely because the new economy is creating new inequalities in our society, the Indian state and its political instruments are duty-bound to find ways of institutionalising some kind of fairness. This duty has become even more pronounced now that the state has been forced to retreat from many areas of economic activity. If the politicians were not to address themselves to the aspirations and dreams of the socially disadvantaged groups, the polity and economy would not experience the peace to enjoy the fruits of the eight per cent economic growth. As it is, vast chunks of the country have already come under the naxalite sway, amenable neither to the state's coercion nor to the lure of the market.

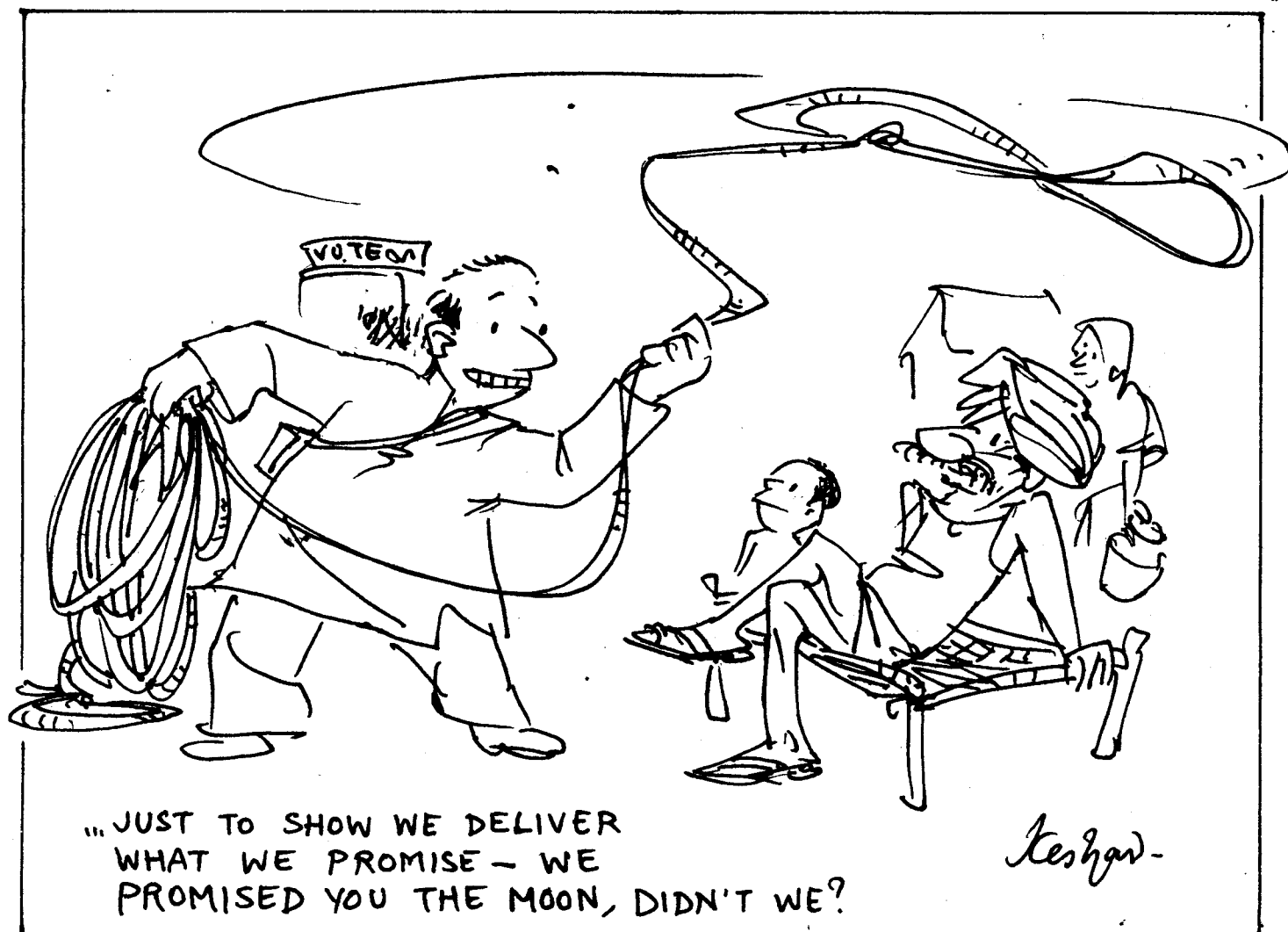
The 2006 reservation controversy will not get resolved easily. Whether or not the IIMs and IITs are forced to open their doors a little wider, the new fashionable intolerance exhibited in these last few days should be a sobering experience for all of us. The Constitution is not a convenient document but a compact that the people of India made among themselves. That compact is premised on the promise of an egalitarian social order. The new intolerance is at odds with that promise. Promoters and patrons of the new economy need to realise the implications of this new intolerance.

STATECRAFT

the Election Commission allowed themselves to be taken in by this elite media noise.

There is little chance of resurrecting the 1990-type hysteria. The reason is simple. The 1990 agitation could be sustained because the largest political party, Congress, lent its support to the anti-Mandal agitation. Rajiv Gandhi's Congress was peeved at the Raja of Manda making it to the Prime Minister's chair. When the V.P. Singh Government opted for the Mandal report, the Congress brought into play all its muscle power to create an illusion of a massive backlash

CARTOONSCAPE



Arjun defiant, cites statute for quota

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Human resources development minister Arjun Singh has framed a combative response to the Election Commission suggestion that "prime facie" his "announcement" of quotas for Other Backward Classes (OBC) in central universities amounted to an election code violation, asserting that the reservations were part of an existing constitutional scheme.

Singh's reply on Sunday notes that article 15(5) of the constitution came into effect on January 20 this year, when it received presidential assent. "Advancement of socially and educationally backward classes in mat-

ters of admission, including reservation of seats—is an existing constitutional provision and by no stretch of imagination is a new announcement," he writes.

The letter is laced with a sense of affront as it states that it was "unfortunate" that the EC had acted on "what it calls 'various reports appearing in electronic and print media', and has concluded that the alleged announcement was a concession to the electorate".

The unapologetic tone in the response to the EC notice indicates that the government is prepared to take on critics of the quota move. Rather, the thinking in the government, if Arjun Singh's letter is any indication, seems to be that aggressive pro-quota positioning will be politically beneficial.

While Arjun Singh chose to interact with

the media after releasing his communication, PM Manmohan Singh has remained silent. While senior sources in the PM's Office said that the decision could not have been taken without clearance from "the very top", meaning Congress president Sonia Gandhi and the PM, Manmohan Singh's public comments are awaited.

Arjun Singh also seems to berate the EC for its prima facie view that the election model code of conduct had been violated without "mentioning which provision of the model code the commission had in mind". The minister's defence is that press reports quoting him were generated when he replied to a specific question.

"The reply given was that the decision would be announced only after elections in five states were over," the letter states.



1 APR 2006

1 APR 2006

Arjun Singh: poll code not violated

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No new announcement made, says Minister

Gargi Parsai

NEW DELHI: Union Human Resource Minister Arjun Singh on Sunday denied the Election Commission's charge that he had violated the model code of conduct for elections by announcing a proposal for 27 per cent reservation for the Other Backward Classes in Central educational institutions, when the election process was on in five States and a Union Territory.

He said a decision on the percentage of reservation of seats was yet to be taken.

In his reply to the explanation sought by the Election Commission through the Cabinet Secretary, Mr. Singh described as "unfortunate" the Commission's decision to seek an explanation from the Government on the basis of media reports.

He said he had responded to specific questions by the press on when the Government planned to announce the decision. "There was no announcement of any concession, much less any other breach of the model code of conduct ... There is no basis even for prima facie view to that effect."

"What is more, it has also been concluded [by EC] that it prima facie violates the model code of conduct without mentioning which provision of the model code the Commission had in view," Mr. Singh said.

In its communication to the Cabinet Secretary on Saturday, the Commission said Mr. Singh's announcement prima facie amounted to a breach of the model code as it gave new concessions to certain sections of the electorate in Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal and Pondicherry.

Mr. Singh told the Commission that he had refrained from making a comment to the media on the reservation issue precisely on the ground that the election process was under way in some States.

He said it was in answer to a specific question asked by the media after an NCERT function on April 5 that he made a reference to the Constitutional Amendment and made it clear that necessary follow-up action was under way and a decision would follow after the Assembly elections.

The Minister said Article 15 (5) of the Constitution came into

force on January 20 this year when it received the Presidential assent. "Thus, the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes of citizens (OBCs) in matters of admission — including reservation of seats and any other means — is an existing constitutional scheme and by no stretch of imagination a new announcement."

"I categorically deny that at any time before or on April 5, 2006, or subsequently, any announcement has been made in respect of any percentage of reservations in favour of any sections of the society or [I] have said anything on the matter which is not already in the public domain or which is inconsistent with the all-party consensus arrived at in Parliament leading to the Constitutional Amendment," he said.

Urging the Commission to drop the proceedings against him in view of the factual position stated by him, Mr. Singh said since the Commission's communication received wide media attention, he was releasing his clarification "to set at rest any misgivings in the public mind in this regard."

by *Arjun Singh & Perincha*

10 APR 2006

THE HINDU

Reservations — over Arjun

The HRD minister is attracting more questions than friends. He certainly deserves it

ARJUN Singh's proposal to introduce 27 per cent reservations for OBCs in institutions of higher education now has to contend with three arguments.

First, from the Election Commission that is rightly exercised over the timing. Second, from the group of ministers' reservations—pun intended—over another, related quick fix—job quotas in the private sector. Third, from Knowledge Commission head Sam Pitroda's genuine expression of surprise as to why the body he heads wasn't consulted before a decision that it can advise over was announced.

The organized, corporatised private sector hires only some three per cent of the workforce. Its role in creating a level playing field for Indian citizens is severely constrained for this reason. Besides, businesses are in the business of making money and the right and freedom to decide whom they should hire is intrinsic to that mandate. The captains of Indian industry have recently gone on record reiterating their social commitment.

They too would want to contribute towards ending the country's ugly legacy of caste discrimination. But while they would be happy to explore various measures of affirmative action (like provid-

ing educational opportunities for the socially disadvantaged), they are strongly opposed to being shackled by statutory reservations in these extremely competitive and globalised times.

Which is why our founding fathers were sensible enough not to pursue the idea of job reservations in the private sector. Which is why the GoM has, not surprisingly, run into a constitutional wall. The care this body took to approach the subject through a process of consultation with constitutional experts is exemplary. If the HRD minister had exhibited a similar attention to detail, the country may have been spared some of the acrimony that this divisive issue has already generated. That Arjun Singh did not even bother to inform the Knowledge Commission about the crucial step he is contemplating—and its chairman has confirmed this in an interview with *The Sunday Express*—speaks volumes for the importunate nature of his stance. With the EC now asking questions that will be somewhat difficult to answer—what would have been lost even for Singh's vision of social justice had the decision come after the assembly elections—the HRD minister might have to repent. He certainly deserves to.

INDIAN EXPRESS

27 pc OBC QUOTA ■ Minister to Election Commission: it's an existing constitutional scheme, not a new announcement

Given the stick, Arjun says Cabinet yet to decide

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

GETTING the stick from the Election Commission, Union Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh has tried to gloss over the announcement on OBC quotas in academic institutions, saying the Cabinet is yet to take a decision.

In his reply to the EC, likely to be sent tomorrow, Singh has enclosed steps taken by him ever since the 93rd amendment, stating that a Cabinet note and a draft Bill are ready and have gone to the Cabinet for consideration.

"It is unfortunate that the Commission has issued the communication to the Cabinet Secretary merely

on the basis of what it calls various reports appearing in the electronic and print media, and has concluded that the alleged announcement amounts to new concession to certain sections of the electorate in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Pondicherry."

"What is more, it has also been concluded (by the EC) that it prima facie, violates the model code of conduct, without mentioning which provision of the model code the Commission had in view," Singh has stated in his reply to the EC.

He said that "it was in reply to a specific question as to when the gov-



Arjun Singh

ernment proposes to announce the decision, the reply given was that the decision would be taken and announced only after the elections to the five state assemblies are over".

He went on to claim, "there was no announcement of any concession much less any other breach of the model code of conduct, as mentioned in your letter. There is no basis even for a prima facie view to that effect."

He has tried to justify the quota for OBCs: "The Article 15(5) of the Constitution came into force on the 20th January, 2006—the date on

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† CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Minister rushes in where SC didn't tread

No mention of OBCs in Constitutional amendment; former CJI Khare says, "Never was there any mention of OBC in SC ruling"

R VENKATARAMAN
NEW DELHI, APRIL 9

HRD Minister Arjun Singh justifies his announcement of 27% OBC quota in Central educational institutions by citing the Constitutional amendment passed this January. This is clearly his own political twist to preempt any debate. For, the amendment makes no mention of OBCs.

Not only that. Former Chief Justice of India Justice V N Khare has told *The Indian Express* that nowhere does the OBC category fig-

ure in any of the key cases on reservation in educational institutions.

The amendment gives the State the power to make "any special provision, by law, for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for SC/STs" in admissions to educational institutions, "including private educational institutions, whether aided or unaided." Minority educational institutions are exempt.

The phrase, "socially and educationally backward classes," has been twisted by Arjun Singh to mean

OBCs. This is significant given that, as Justice Khare says, not one of the three key Supreme Court rulings on the subject, Pai, Islamic Academy and Inamdar, mentioned OBCs as a target group for reservations in educational institutions.

Justice Khare, who presided over the bench in both Pai and Islamic Academy case, made it clear: "The interpretation of Pai judgment means there can be reservation fixed for the weaker sections but never was there any mention of

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সংরক্ষণ-বিতর্কে কৈফিয়ত চাইল কমিশন

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, নয়াদিল্লি, ৮ এপ্রিল: মণ্ডল কমিশনের পুনরাবৃত্তি শুধু সময় নির্বাচনেই একটু গোলমাল হয়ে গিয়েছে অর্জুন সিংহের। তাই সংরক্ষণ নিয়ে সংবাদমাধ্যমে বেফাঁস বিবৃতির জন্য এ বার কৈফিয়ত দিতে হবে কেন্দ্রীয় মানবসম্পদ উন্নয়ন মন্ত্রীকে। আজ ক্যাবিনেট সচিবকে চিঠি দিয়ে কৈফিয়ত তলব করেছে নির্বাচন কমিশন। উত্তরের জন্য সময় দেওয়া হয়েছে সোমবার বিকেল ৫টা পর্যন্ত।

পাট রাজ্যে ভোট ঘোষণার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে রাজ্যগুলির সঙ্গে কেন্দ্রের উপরেও বলবৎ হয়েছে নির্বাচনী আচরণবিধি। এই পরিস্থিতিতে কী ভাবে সংবাদমাধ্যমে প্রকাশিত খবরের ব্যাখ্যা দিতে গিয়ে সরকারের প্রস্তাবের কথা অর্জুন ভাঙলেন, তা নিয়ে প্রশ্ন তুলেছে নির্বাচন কমিশন। তাদের মতে, এটা ভোটারদের একাংশের জন্য নতুন ছাড় ঘোষণার সামিল এবং সরাসরি নির্বাচনী আচরণবিধি লঙ্ঘন।

কমিশনের হস্তক্ষেপের দাবি কালই

তুলেছিল বিজেপি। অবশ্য সে কারণে নয়, সংবাদমাধ্যমের তোলপাড় দেখে আজ নিজে থেকেই কৈফিয়ত তলব করেছে কমিশন। সংসদের শীতকালীন অধিবেশনে সংবিধান সংশোধনী এনে সব ধরনের শিক্ষাপ্রতিষ্ঠানে তফসিলি জাতি, উপজাতি ও অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির জন্য অর্ধেক আসন সংরক্ষণের ব্যবস্থা করে সরকার। তার পরেই আইন কার্যকর করতে উদ্যোগী হয় মানবসম্পদ উন্নয়ন মন্ত্রক। অনগ্রসর শ্রেণির জন্য ২৭ শতাংশ সংরক্ষণের প্রস্তাব তৈরি হয়। স্বাস্থ্য, আইন-সহ বিভিন্ন মন্ত্রকের আওতাতে বেশ কিছু উচ্চ শিক্ষাপ্রতিষ্ঠান থাকায় তাদের কাছেও পাঠানো হয় ওই প্রস্তাব। সব প্রতিষ্ঠানে মেডিক্যাল পাঠ্যক্রমে সংরক্ষণের ব্যাপারে তাদের সম্মতি আজ জানিয়েও দিয়েছে স্বাস্থ্যমন্ত্রক।

বিষয়টি সংবাদমাধ্যমে ফাঁস হলে মুখ খোলেন অর্জুন। ভোটের পরেই সরকার সিদ্ধান্ত নেবে ও আগামী শিক্ষাবর্ষেই তা চালু হবে—এ কথাও

বলে দেন তিনি। কিন্তু যে সিদ্ধান্ত এখনও মন্ত্রিসভায় অনুমোদিত হয়নি, তা নিয়ে অর্জুন কেন ভোটের আগে মুখ খুললেন, তা নিয়েই বিতর্ক।

অর্জুন গোড়া থেকেই দাবি করছেন, এই সিদ্ধান্তে সম্মতি রয়েছে খোদ প্রধানমন্ত্রীর। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় বলছে অন্য কথা। এই সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়ে কোনও কোনও মহলের যে ক্ষোভ হতে পারে, কলকাতায় তৃণ মেনে নিয়েছেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ও। কিছু ভাল ছাত্রছাত্রী বঞ্চিত হবেন, স্বীকার করেছেন পশ্চিমবঙ্গ সফররত এআইসিসি-র সাধারণ সম্পাদক মার্গারেট আলভাও। ফলে অর্জুনের ঘোষণায় কংগ্রেসও যে স্বস্তিতে নেই, তা স্পষ্ট। আর তা বুঝেই আজ সরব বিজেপি। মুখপাত্র রবিশঙ্কর প্রসাদ বলেছেন, “এতেই প্রমাণ হয় মনমোহন সিংহকেও গ্রাহ্য করে ছেন না অর্জুন।”

তবে কমিশনের কাছে যথাসময়েই জবাবদিহি দেবে সরকার। অর্জুনের মন্ত্রক সূত্রে জানানো হয়েছে, যেহেতু

সংসদে পাস করা বিলের ভিত্তিতে এই প্রস্তাব তৈরি হয়েছে, তাই এতে নির্বাচনী আচরণবিধি ভঙ্গের প্রশ্ন উঠতে পারে না। আর সরকার এ বিষয়ে এখনও কোনও চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত নেয়নি। কোনও ঘোষণাও করা হয়নি।

তবে প্রস্তাবের সময় ও পদ্ধতিগত ত্রুটি নিয়ে যে বিতর্ক হচ্ছে, তার থেকে বড় প্রশ্ন উঠেছে উচ্চশিক্ষার বাছাই প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলিকে সংরক্ষণের ভারে ন্যূন করে দেওয়ার সরকারি সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েই। দেশ জুড়ে ছাত্রছাত্রী, শিক্ষক মহলে এই সিদ্ধান্তে যে ক্ষোভ তৈরি হয়েছে, তার সঙ্গে যুক্ত হয়েছে শিল্পমহলের ক্ষোভও। এই সিদ্ধান্তে বিভাজনের ছায়া দেখছেন টাটা গোষ্ঠীর কর্ণধার রতন টাটা। বেসরকারি ক্ষেত্রে চাকরিতে সংরক্ষণের প্রশ্নেও তাঁর আপত্তি স্পষ্ট জানিয়েছেন তিনি। ভাল ছাত্রছাত্রীদের বঞ্চনা থেকে বাঁচাতে সব প্রতিষ্ঠানে আসন সংখ্যা বাড়ানোর প্রস্তাব দিয়েছেন রাষ্ট্রপতি এ পি জে আব্দুল কালাম।

Cabinet secy returns quota Bill to HRD

NEW DELHI, April 10 : The Cabinet Secretary is said to have returned the HRD ministry's draft Bill on the quota issue apparently in view of the Assembly polls.

The Cabinet Secretary's move was driven by the consideration that the EC's code of conduct is in force, which the government could not afford to violate. Mr Arjun Singh was reported to be keen to get the draft Bill taken up by the Cabinet for discussion.

Directors of six IIMs discussed the quota issue in Ahmedabad.

CAT result: The CAT result is to be published on 12 April. ■ SNS/PTI

1 1 APR 2006

THE STATESMAN

EC turns quota heat on Centre

Health Ministry Favours Reservations In Letter To HRD

TNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi: While the Indian parliament has passed the bill to hike reservations in central educational institutions, and the President has given his assent to the measure, the proposal has invited criticism from the Election Commission (EC) and political parties, including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Despite the right constitutional moves, it is the timing of the proposal to reserve an additional 27% seats in central institutions that has prompted the commission to seek an explanation from the Union human resources development minister Arjun Singh.

Taking a suo motu action, the announcement made by Singh, as reported in the electronic and print media, "amounted to new concessions to certain sections of electorate" in the poll-bound states of Assam, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala and Pondicherry, and is prima facie a violation of the model code of conduct, EC sources said.

In a letter to the cabinet secretary, the EC pointed out that it had informed the government that the model code of conduct would be applicable to the Centre also as far as the five poll-bound states were concerned.

Further, the commission has asked Singh to turn in his explanation by 5 pm on Monday.

Meanwhile, the Union health ministry has favoured the proposal of 27% quota for students of Other Backward Classes in medical educational institutes that fall under it. The health ministry has written to the HRD ministry, which had sought

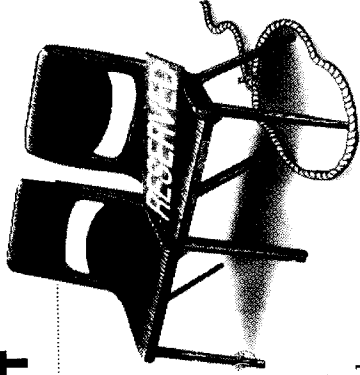
QUOTING CONFLICT

* * * The decision was taken by the PM in person. Parliament has passed a law, we are implementing it.* * *

— HRD MINISTER
ARJUN SINGH

* * * Proposal for quota in IITs, IIMs will be a disaster as it will be wrong and ineffective

— Ex-IIT-MADRAS
DIRECTOR
P V ANDRESAN



* * * We will begin a nationwide movement against the proposal. We have already spoken to IITs in Kanpur, Madras and Mumbai as well as with our alumni and faculty members

— DELHI IIT STUDENT **ABHIJIT JAVANTI**

'It's Arjun's one-upmanship over PM'

New Delhi: The BJP has called the HRD ministry's proposal for reservations in central education institutions a show of "one-upmanship" by Arjun Singh over Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

"It (the proposal) is an intra-party war. There are clear indications that Arjun Singh is trying one-upmanship over Manmohan Singh," BJP spokesman Ravi Shankar Prasad told reporters here.

However, he said his party would reserve its comprehensive reaction to the proposal until it studies it. "The party will come out with a structured view after going through it in detail," Prasad remarked. Agencies

its views on the proposal. and Jawaharlal Institute of Post-Graduate Medical Education and Research (Pondicherry).

The reservation would be effective in all medical courses, including post-graduate courses in institutions like the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Post-graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (Chandigarh), Vardhman Mahavir Medical College (Delhi), Lady Hardinge (Delhi)

► **Related reports on Pages 6, 7, 8 & 9**

Move could trigger exodus of students

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The mood is grim. Students, across universities and schools, on Friday claimed that they felt unwanted in their own country and said they had little option now but to try and emigrate both for their education and employment.

While their anxiety—triggered by the government plan to reserve another 27% of the seats in IIMs, IITs and central universities, taking the overall reserved seats to 50%—might sound somewhat overstated, academics admitted that there would be a real crush for the reduced number of seats. If students, then explore options in other countries, it would scarcely be surprising.

Teachers said the frustration over opportunities in India coupled with aggressive marketing by some European countries could see a dramatic rise in the number of students travelling to the US, UK and Australia.

They said such the proposed policy was a throwback to the 1950s and '60s when caste-based reservations in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka universities had led to an exodus of bright, mainly upper caste students who had sought options in the US and UK.

Said an academic, "This could lead to a re-flooding of India's brightest to European and American universities."

While opinion is divided on whether a large presence of Indian students is a good or a bad thing—the high presence of Indians in top institutions of the world has, after all, earned the country a lot of respect—what appears more worrying is the growing feeling among upper-caste youth of being forsaken.

► **Students in despair, Page 7**

DIVIDING THE FUTURE

Quotas are back in the news, igniting debates over what the new move will lead to

By Rajeev Deshpande/TNN

If democracy is a numbers game, the OBC revolution was long overdue. A little more than half of India's population, the sheer dominance of backward castes as a demographic grouping should have ensured a pre-eminent slot in the political pecking order. After all, no political party can eye power without OBC support.

Yet, progress of OBC politics has been uneven. Geographically, backward politics arrived south of the Vindhyas much before it began to stir the cowbelt. The South Indian Welfare Association founded in 1916, of which DMK is an offshoot, campaigned for social justice and was better known as Justice Party.

Backward dominance in Tamil Nadu politics and high quotas in educational institutions have been the norm since late 60's. In Karnataka, Devraj Urs aggressively mobilised backward communities in the early 70's, providing Congress with a vote bank which it continues to tap even today. In Andhra

Pradesh, backward communities have been the deciding factor in Congress-TDP shootouts. In Kerala, both Congress and Left parties have progressively shed inhibitions about openly wooing backwards — in January, CM Oommen Chandy promised a 20 per cent reservation in colleges. Along with Maharashtra, southern states have edged upper castes out of political reckoning for decades.

In Maharashtra, Congress forged a Maratha-led, non-upper caste political consensus which was first successfully challenged in 1994 by the Shiv Sena-BJP. Even then, apart from severe Congress infighting, it was the desertion of a critical mass of backwards in Marathwada and Vidarbha which sank the Congress boat.

The OBC winds blew more slowly in the north, where anti-brahminical movements did not take root as they did in the south. But over decades, social aspirations began to be driven by economic well-being brought about by the green revolution. Feudal attitudes began to fray as social awareness grew. Slowly OBCs began to flex unused political muscle. V P Singh's Mandal move, resorted to in the face of Devi Lal's challenge, unleashed the genie in 1990, giving birth to OBC forces led by Mulayam Singh and Lalu Prasad in UP and Bihar. With sizeable Yadav populations serving as nuclei, aggressive backward mobilisation drew on Muslim support to become a near unbeatable combination.

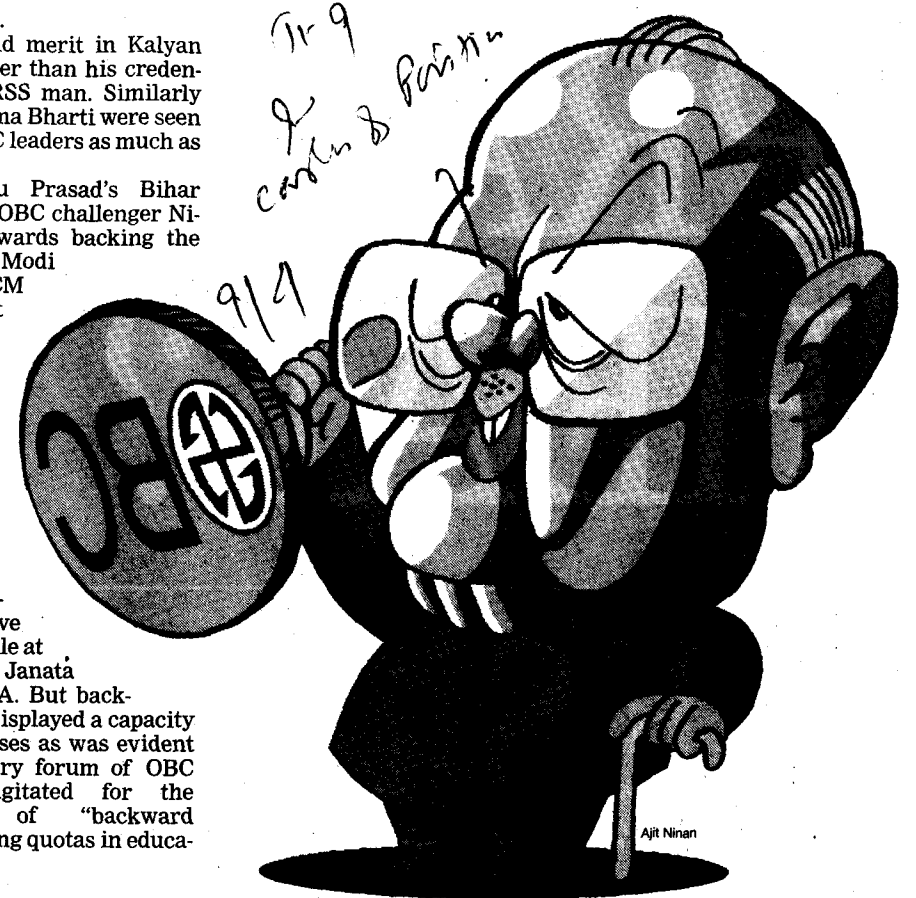
The magnitude of the Mandal fallout forced Congress and BJP to carry

out course corrections.

Suddenly, BJP found merit in Kalyan Singh's OBC tag, rather than his credentials as a long-time RSS man. Similarly Narendra Modi and Uma Bharti were seen in their avatars as OBC leaders as much as Hindutva mascots.

When finally Lalu Prasad's Bihar fortress fell, it was to OBC challenger Nitish Kumar with forwards backing the NDA. BJP's Sushil Modi would not be Deputy CM but for the accident that banias in Bihar are OBCs. In Congress, too, OBC politics has become mainstream. Ashok Gehlot, a Mali, was the party's choice as Rajasthan CM.

OBCs do not function as a homogeneous block. There are rivalries — Mulayam and Lalu have rarely been friends while at least one section of the Janata Parivar is part of NDA. But backward politicians have displayed a capacity to unite for larger causes as was evident when the parliamentary forum of OBC MPs successfully agitated for the specific inclusion of "backward castes" in a bill providing quotas in educational institutions.



I feel bad about it—
wish I was from the
backward classes.
There's nothing we
can do about
it except pray
that it
gets implemented
from next year

Quota talk just adds to students' stress

By Shreya Ray/TNN

New Delhi: For all the talk about de-stressing the board-examination system, the move to extend OBC quotas in Central universities may do just that. School students approaching their college admissions are afraid that with just about 50% seats left for the general category candidates, colleges may turn out to be a distant dream. Says Vaibhav Mishra, who has

just passed out of Modern School, "I feel bad about it—wish I was from the backward classes. There's nothing we can do about it really except pray that it gets implemented from next year." Vaibhav is also afraid that this might trigger off violence of the magnitude seen during the Mandal Commission.

"After seeing what happened then, I wonder what will happen. This is just a ploy by the government to garner votes," he adds.

Adds Dhruv Gupta, who is in Class 12, DPS, Mathura Road, "It's okay to have some reservation but if they keep increasing the percentage this way, the boards will automatically become tougher and more competitive. This is ironical, considering they want to make the boards free of any tension."

Says Sameer Dixit of Modern Barakhamba, "This is scary. The DU admissions have been tough at the best of times and this will just make it worse."

Vidur of GD Goenka says that from an objective point of view, this is a positive move as it seeks to benefit the marginalised sections. "However, personally, I do realise that it will decrease my chances of making it through to a good college in DU," he says.

Damini Manikata of St Thomas is also of a similar view. "This just means that we will have to work harder," she says.

US prefers 'affirmative action'

By Manoj Mitta/TNN

New Delhi: While corporate icon N R Narayana Murthy denounces the very idea of caste-based quotas, his US counterparts have come out in support of race-based "affirmative action." The difference in the approach to social justice — quota as opposed to affirmative action — has a lot to do with the contrast in attitudes displayed by big business in the two democracies.

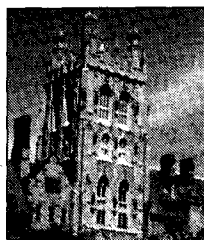
While the quota system in India requires numerical targets to be fulfilled, the affirmative action programme in the US is more about taking race as a factor to achieve diversity among students or employees. Quota as such is frowned upon in US because it leads to reverse discrimination. Equally significant, US does not see affirmative action as a corrective to historical injustices but rather as a means to achieve diversity in enlightened self-interest.

Little wonder then that when the US Supreme Court was dealing with a challenge three years ago to affirmative action in Michigan University, dozens of Fortune 500 companies, including Microsoft, Intel, Kellogg, Kodak and Dow Chemical, threw their weight behind the university's bid to preserve race-conscious admissions. Intervening in the case, they urged the court to uphold affirmative action in admissions so that corporates could in turn can take race as a factor while selecting employees.

All this may seem inconceivable in the Indian context given the trouble the UPA government has been facing in meeting the promise it made in the common minimum programme (CMP) of persuading the corporate sector to adopt affirmative action for the benefit of SCs and STs.

The government's failure to make any visible progress in this regard may be because of the CMP's formulation of affirmative action: "The UPA government is very sensitive to the issue of affirmative action, including reservations, in the private sector." The implication is, the government regards reservations or quota as a component of affirmative action.

This is far cry from the American approach in which a great deal of effort is demonstrated to ensure affirmative action doesn't work like quota and nobody alleges reverse discrimination. As a corollary, the UPA government may have to rethink quota as a strategy of pursuing social justice and consider the alternative of affirmative action with far greater degree of acceptability, whether in jobs or in educational institutions. In its landmark judgment delivered in 2003, the US supreme court ruled colleges can take race as a factor in selecting their students because it furthers "a compelling interest in obtaining the educational benefits that flow from a diverse student body."



The affirmative action plan in the US is more about taking race as a factor to achieve diversity among students or staff

Ivy League's lip service to quotas

By Ronojoy Sen/TNN

New Delhi: What lessons does the experience of affirmative action in elite US universities hold for us? There are no simple answers, but Berkeley sociologist Jerome Karabel's recent book, *The Chosen*, provides some pointers. Though universities have traditionally been regarded as the lynchpin of America's affirmative action programme, Karabel shows that this hasn't always been true. After trawling through the archives of Harvard, Yale and Princeton, he concludes the big three have determined their admission policy on outcomes that suit institutional interests. So although they pay lip service to diversity, the Ivy League remains dominated by wealthy and, perhaps, white students.

Karabel's findings for Ivy League universities have been corroborated for other schools of higher education. A University of Pennsylvania study found that though more blacks and Hispanics were enrolling from the time affirmative action came into being in the late 1960s, the number and share of white students who attend college had risen at a much faster rate. In fact, black and Hispanic students were concentrated in institutions offering only two-year associate degrees, and very few research universities took large numbers of them.

Another survey conducted in 2002 revealed that only 6% of the freshman class at MIT were African-Americans, while the figure for Berkeley was even lower at

4%. The African-American population in the US in 2002 was about 12%.

The mixed success of affirmative action in US universities is reflected by the general condition of African Americans. Several recent studies, including Columbia University professor Ronald B. Mincy's "Black Males Left Behind", has documented the worsening plight of blacks. One of the findings is that in inner cities, more than half of all black men don't finish high school. So the question of this group entering university doesn't arise.

Though affirmative action has not had the desired results, prominent black intellectuals like Cornell West of Princeton still believe that it's essential. In a telling passage in his book, "Race Matters", he writes, "Progressives should view affirmative action as neither a major solution to poverty nor a sufficient means to equality. We should see it as primarily playing a negative role namely, to ensure that discriminatory practices against women and people of colour are abated. Given the history of this country, it is a virtual certainty that without affirmative action, racial and sexual discrimination would return with a vengeance."

It is ironical that while affirmative action founders in the US, other connections still work fine in elite US universities. Harvard accepts 40% of applicants who are children of alumni but only 11% of general applicants.

An ABC of the OBCs

By Amit Bhattacharya/TNN

New Delhi: 'OBC' is suddenly back in the political lexicon, but not many seem aware what 'Other Backward Classes' is all about. Not surprising, since this category is essentially legal and contains disparate communities, many nebulously perched on the traditional caste hierarchy.

Simply put, a majority of OBCs are 'shudras' — the lowest rung in the four-varna system, higher only to the outcasts or Dalits. But OBCs also include former Dalits who converted, many nomadic people and even some tribes. It's a vast classification comprising 52% of the population and so diverse that most OBCs have never been able to unite politically.

Of the 5,000 castes and sub-castes, 2,052 are on the OBC list. The OBC category formally came into existence when in 1953, the Kaka Kalelkar Commission was tasked with identifying the socially and educationally backward. The term "other" was added to distinguish this category from Dalits. In 1979, the Janata Party government set up the Mandal commission with the same mandate. B C Mandal evolved 11 indicators of backwardness under the broad heads of social, educational and economic and the status of communities in different areas.

The result was a detailed enumeration of backward communities that is area-specific. For instance, Banias are on the OBC list in Bihar, but not so in other states. Jats — whose position in the traditional pecking order has been ambiguous — have recently been marked OBC in Rajasthan though they are considered a dominant caste elsewhere.

Most communities on the list though are what's called 'occupation' castes — Teli, Dhobi, Darzi, Halwai, Lohar, Sunar, Rangrez etc. These categories include Muslims as well. (Contrary to popular belief, OBCs include non-Hindus.) Most such occupations fall in the distinct ranks of Most Backward Castes (MBCs) — a sub-group whose condition is closer to that of Dalits.

Castes other than MBCs have clearly gained from social mobility and political power. Yadavs and Kurmis of UP and Bihar are prime examples. But there are others. Lodhis and Koreris, for instance, are among the most politically mobilised OBCs of the heartland. In the South too, where affirmative action began in the 1930s, some backward communities have acquired clout. Nadars and Thevars of TN, Volkaligas and Lingayats of Karnataka and Ezhavas in Kerala are now among the powerful castes. Curiously, backward political mobilisation hasn't been that successful in AP, where intermediary castes such as Reddys and Kammas — who, like the Jats, aren't on the OBC list — have dominated.

In the end, there are still seats vacant

In 1997, Sunil M., a reserved category student, enrolled in IIT Delhi for the four-year engineering programme. Eight years on, Sunil's batchmates have landed plum jobs. In 2005, the IIT authorities asked Sunil to leave because of his below par performance.

Even now more than 60% of the students whose performances are discussed in the Student Review Committee meetings of IIT Delhi, belong to the reserved categories. Of the students who finish the four year programme in six years (the maximum allowed) because of their inability to cope, a similar proportion belong to reserved categories. The average cumulative grade point average of these students reportedly hovers in the 5-6.5 range. For the general category it is between 7-8.5.

Says dean (students' affairs), IITD, S M Ishtiaque, "The committee meets twice every semester. Often we are forced to counsel these students into taking less number of courses.

This despite the fact that every year, for 40-odd SC/ST students, we conduct a one-year preparatory course in Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics."

A 1993 report by ex-IIT-Madras director P V Indiresan and ex-IIT-Delhi director N C Nigam dwells on the impact of quotas in IITs. "Nearly 50% of the reserved seats remain vacant as SC/ST students are unable to secure the minimum threshold marks (two-thirds of the last candidate admitted in the general category). Of those admitted, almost 25% are asked to leave due to poor performance," said the report. The vacancies caused IIT-Madras to increase its overall intake by 40.

The scenario at the IITs is marginally better. "We manage to fill about 15-18% of the reserved seats," said an IIT-Kozhikode source.

It is not just academics that suffers in the hands of reservation. The placements

of these revered institutes too bear the brunt. As a IITD source explained, "A lot of students get rejected on CGPA alone. Besides, companies these days place a lot of importance on extra-curricular activities. But for many quota students, the regular syllabus is too difficult to handle, where do they get time for ECA?" Many in these institutes also blame the quota system for the increasing levels of depression among students that was brought into focus by the recent spate of suicides in IITs across the country. Faced with the prospect of quotas not being filled, governments in the past have forced IITs to relax entry norms. "During the 80s, IITs were unable to fill reserved seats and government asked us to lower standards. We even took students who have scored zeros," said ex-IIT Kharagpur director Kasturi Lal Chopra. That has changed now with the minimum eligibility criterion.

— With inputs from Abantika Ghosh, Hemali Chhapla and Neelima Mahajan/TNN



OBC QUOTA ■ From AIIMS, JIPMER, CMC (Vellore) to Bangalore law school, all to implement 49.5% quota order

Not just IIT, IIMs, quotas across all top schools

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

NOT just IIMs, IITs and Central universities—top academic institutes, cutting across various fields, will also come under HRD Minister Arjun Singh's plan to impose 49.5% quota by adding 27% for OBCs.

Prominent among these institutes to be covered under the quota regime are the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Jawaharlal Institute of Post Graduate Medical Education and Research (Pondicherry), Christian Medical College (Vellore), National Law School (Bangalore), Indian Agricultural Research

Institute (Pusa), and the Indian Institutes of Mass Communication (Delhi and Dhenkanal). Sources

told *The Indian Express* that to implement the OBC quotas, the HRD ministry is coordinating with key ministries of the government which control these educational institutes under their jurisdiction: Health, Law, Information and Broadcasting and Agriculture.

This comes after Singh announced on Wednesday that almost



The final orders to implement another 27% reservation for OBCs will be announced after elections in five states are completed.

HRD minister Arjun Singh, sources said, has, in fact, informed his Cabinet colleagues to implement the order after the Constitution was amended in the winter session.

A new Clause 5 was inserted in Article 15 of the Constitution allowing advancement of socially and economically backward sections through special provisions for their admission to educational institutions, whether aided or unaided by the government.

Besides providing for reservation in unaided institutions, state

governments are expected to make individual laws that would decide on the percentage of quotas for different categories and the fee structure.

While the amendment gives a right to all states—and also empowers the Centre—to take adequate steps to ensure the upliftment of the socially and economically backward classes, this could lead to lesser number of seats for the 'general category' students.

To allay such fears, the HRD minister said: "We have asked the IIMs to increase their intake (of students)." This instruction, officials said, has been passed to offset the impact of increased reservations in these premier institutes.



AIIMS to National Institute of Design: all follow Arjun Singh's order

half of total seats—49.5%—in IITs, IIMs and central universities, including Delhi University, will be reserved for OBCs, SCs and STs. At present, 22.5% seats are reserved for SCs (15%) and STs (7.5%).

07 APR 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

Arjun dismisses quota row

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Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 7: The Union HRD minister, Mr Arjun Singh, has dismissed the storm of opposition that has been set off by his recent showcasing of the Congress-led UPA government's decision to extend reservation to OBCs besides the existing beneficiaries, SCs and STs, in Central universities and other Centre-funded institutions of higher education, including IITs and IIMs.

On the raging quota row, Mr Arjun Singh said: "Some people are trying to whip up the issue, I know that." He did not take any names.

The Centre's proposal to provide 27% reservation to OBCs, who account for the majority of the country's population, will result in an increase in reservation up to 49.5% in Central universities and institutions, given that SCs and STs together are already entitled to 22.5% quota.

The move has sparked

off considerable resentment among the students belonging to the general category and others, including academics, even as it has also been welcomed by another section of the people in the country.

Justifying the proposal pending the approval of the Union cabinet for its implementation, the HRD minister pointed out that Parliament had passed the Constitution amendment Bill (In December last year) envisaging such provisions (ensuring and hiking reservation for socially backward classes in State-aided and private institutions) with virtual unanimity after deliberations with various political parties. The President has now given his assent to the Bill paving the way for its implementation. "This is the essence of it," he said.

Asked about the resentment among some students over the fresh quota proposal, which is being dubbed as the Mandal effect in the education sec-

tor, Mr Singh tersely said, "maybe".

The HRD minister has made it clear that the proposal will be cleared after the April-May Assembly elections in five states.

The general category students apprehend that the move will drastically reduce the seats available for them in such institutions.

The proposal has reignited the merit vs quota debate, especially with regard to institutes of excellence such as IIMs and IITs, with a section of academics venting their opposition on this ground. Apart from the beneficiaries, the decision has, however, been also appreciated by other people for being part of a socially affirmative action plan.

The enactment of the Constitutional amendment has evidently cleared the decks for the government's plan, with the legislation enabling the Centre and the states to provide reservation to the OBCs in educational institutions.

Quota for OBCs: "No escape for Government"

"It is a Constitutional mandate now and it is our responsibility to implement it": Arjun Singh

Special Correspondent

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Amid widespread furor that has been kicked up over the Government proposal to reserve seats for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Central educational institutions including the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), the Union Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry on Friday maintained that the "Government has no escape" but to make such a provision as it is a Constitutional

mandate now. "Parliament has enacted a law [93rd Constitution Amendment Act]. It is our responsibility to implement it," HRD Minister Arjun Singh said in a brief intervention with the media. Also, he pointed to the consensus across the political spectrum for such a move.

The 93rd Amendment introduced a new clause in Article 15 of the Constitution under which the State can make any special provision by law for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of

citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes "in so far as such special provisions relate to their admission to educational institutions including private educational institutions

— whether aided or unaided by the State — other than minority educational institutions...."

Meanwhile, Maharashtra's Public Works Minister Chhagan Bhujbal met Mr. Arjun Singh to express gratitude for the Centre's move to reserve seats for OBCs in Central educational institutions.

He called on the HRD Minister in his capacity as chairman of Akhil Bhartiya Mahatma Phule Samata Parishad.

In a letter to the HRD Minister articulating his gratitude, Mr. Bhujbal noted with concern

that this time also "misguided divisive tendencies and forces are trying to stir up public opinion and destabilise the process of social reforms".

Only last month the Parishad had submitted a charter of demands to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Congress president Sonia Gandhi listing the measures that ought to be taken to improve the lot of OBCs. Extending the Mandal Commission recommendations to Central educational institutions was one of the demands articulated by the Parishad.

● **Points to consensus across the political spectrum for such a move**

● **Maharashtra Minister thanks Centre for the decision**

Quota juggernaut rolls on

Central varsities won't get extra seats, IITs will

CHETAN Chauhan
New Delhi, April 7

CENTRAL UNIVERSITIES may not get additional admission seats for 27 per cent other backward classes (OBC) quota as per Mandal Commission's recommendation. The IITs and IIMs may get additional seats as the Planning Commission has already sanctioned money for the additional intake for the current financial year.

Indicating this, amid the raging controversy over the reservation proposal in Central educational institutions, HRD minister Arjun Singh said the possibility of increasing intake in Central universities was not there because of resource crunch. "We were considering ways to increase intake in technical education institutions", Singh said. There is also a possibility of scholarship for OBC students in IIMs on the lines of scholarship for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe seats to offset the huge fees charged by IIMs.

The proposal for seeking 27 per cent seats in Central educational institutions is likely to be brought before the Cabinet. It will cover all Central educational institutions, including medical colleges and other educational institutions that don't come under HRD.

"The Parliament has passed a law. It's our responsibility to implement it. Beyond this, we don't have a role to play in this", Singh told reporters. Asked whether the Prime Minister was not informed about the decision, Singh shot back: "Very strange! The decision was taken by the Prime Minister in person. Now, if they have gone out of the loop, I don't know".

In an oblique finger pointed towards

SC ruling on OBCs

The Supreme Court has held that meritorious candidates, who use their OBC status to get their service preferences in the civil services, would not be counted as part of the percentage quota fixed for OBCs. A Bench, comprising justices H.K. Sema and A.R. Lakshmanan, said that the merit list OBC candidates even if they avail of the relaxed standards prescribed for their class to avail of better service preferences would not be counted as OBCs for the purpose of fixing reservation percentages. They would, instead, be counted as general category candidates, the apex court held.

Opposition parties, Singh said, "Some people are trying to whip up the issue. I know that. But it's a provision of the Constitution which was cleared by Parliament with near unanimity," he said.

Sources, however, said that the reservation, according to the 104th Constitution amendment in private educational institutions would be implemented in 'letter and spirit' since the other partners of the UPA had already agreed to implementing Mandal in educational institutions.

Some academics have, however, criticised the proposal based on the Mandal formula providing 27 per cent quota for OBCs in Central educational institutions and the IIMs and IITs.

MANDAL GHOST



Arjun Singh

BAD NEWS

Central univs will not get additional seats to cope with the 27 per cent OBC quota

EXCEPTIONS

Those gunning for IITs and IIMs have a better chance. More seats coming

CASH CRUNCH

Univs face a shortage of funds, says HRD minister Arjun Singh

BJP IN A BIND

Having supported amendment to provide quota in all institutions, it can't openly oppose the 27 per cent OBC quota

WAIT AND WATCH

However, BJP aware that the anger in the student community could snowball again...Says will support quota if it applies to minority institutions

Why the BJP cannot oppose the government

SHEKHAR Iyer
New Delhi, April 7

CONSCIOUS OF its dependence on the OBC factor and having supported the government in amending the Constitution to provide for quota in all educational institutions, the BJP finds that it cannot openly oppose HRD minister Arjun Singh's proposal in this regard.

After all, that was what the government pledged to do to when OBC MPs (cutting across all parties) were worried about quota for their community.

Last December, when the amendment was to be passed in Parliament, OBC MPs and the key NDA ally, Janata Dal (U), raised this issue when the BJP said their interests would be affected if the minority institutions were kept out. The government then promised to apply reservation for their community. Once that happened, the BJP's bid to block the bill on the ground that the minority institutions had been kept out fell flat.

That the interests of the OBCs would be protected while providing for reservation to SC and ST after the bill was made into law convinced the OBC leaders.

They were told that the provision for OBCs could be incorporated and the aim and objectives of the bill clearly mentioned that "socially backward citizens" as among the beneficiaries.

The BJP did not then wish to appear to be standing in the way of the Bill as it would mean that it is opposed to quota for SC and ST in private schools and colleges. It supported the Constitution amendment.

BEHIND THE NEWS

Now, with the simmering disquiet in the student community, the BJP would rather wait to see whether it gathers momentum at the time of admission season. The BJP cannot oppose what is politically correct. Therefore, on Friday, the BJP was guarded in its reaction to Arjun Singh's 27 per cent seat quota in institutes and colleges of higher education run by the Centre.

BJP spokesperson Prakash Javadekar said it would support the proposals provided they were also applied to minority institutions. He accused the Congress-led Central government of playing a "political stunt" by what he called was its "selective leak" of the reservation proposal while the election process is on in five states.

"We are pro-reservationists. But what the Congress-led government is doing is a mere political stunt, a fraud on the poor people by selectively leaking the proposal when there are elections in five states", he said.

Javadekar said, "If they (the government and the Congress) are serious and sincere about it, they should reserve seats for backward classes in minority-run educational institutions as well. Why are they not doing it?"

BJP vice-president Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi dismissed it as an "election stunt". He said, "We're in favour of reservations, but we condemn this electoral stunt of the UPA".

Kerala to ensure quota for backward communities

State Cabinet decides to amend rules, following Narendran Commission report

Special Correspondent

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The Kerala Cabinet on Wednesday decided to amend rules to ensure that no backward community missed the posts reserved for it in Government services. The decision came as part of a consensus approach to the findings of the Narendran Commission on representation of Backward Classes in public services. The panel had submitted its findings to the Government four years ago. The Cabinet decided to set up a permanent commission on Backward Classes as directed by the Supreme Court to re-determine reservation on the basis of population and backwardness of communities. A monitoring committee with the Chief Minister as chairman will be constituted to ensure that each backward community got its share of posts.

Concession for FCs

As a concession for forward

communities, the Cabinet decided to reserve 10 per cent of seats for degree and post-graduate courses in Government colleges to families of forward communities living below the poverty line (BPL).

While the existing 20 per cent reservation for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will continue, 20 per cent will be reserved for other backward communities.

However, admissions to private colleges will be governed by the direct payment agreement.

The educational concessions being given to girls of Muslim and Nadar communities will be extended to girls belonging to Other Backward Classes.

The benefits will also be given to the girls of BPL families in forward communities.

Crucial decisions

Announcing the decisions, Chief Minister Oommen Chandy said these were crucial decisions aimed at ensuring social justice. "The Government is going to the

extent possible in ensuring justice under the given circumstances."

Noting that there was no consensus on making up for the vacancies lost by the Backward Classes over the past 10 years from their reservation quota of 40 per cent, the Chief Minister said talks on this question would continue.

Mr. Chandy said the Public Service Commission (PSC) would be told to include enough number of candidates in supplementary lists for appointments to reserved posts so as to prevent loss of posts due to Backward Classes. Their number could be as high as five times the number of posts if qualified hands were available.

If qualified hands from the specified backward community were not available for a post, it would be kept vacant.

This would prevent loss of 'turn' of a particular community to another backward community

or inclusion of the post in the merit list. The Kerala Subordinate Service rules would be amended for the purpose.

Transparency

In order to ensure transparency, it is to be specified that the PSC should publish an appointment chart showing eligible candidates on open competition and on reservation turns separately. The period of validity of a ranklist will be considered as a selection year.

Mr. Chandy said the Government would ensure that reservation norms were followed in all temporary appointments in future. Steps would be taken to entrust selection of candidates for all appointments in the public sector and autonomous and quasi-Government institutions to the PSC.

The Chief Minister thanked all who had cooperated in reaching the consensus and called for cooperation of everyone in implementing the decisions.

THE HINDU

26 JAN 2006

Panel on SCs, STs wants cell in PMO

Says schemes did not yield desired result

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Parliamentary Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has reiterated its recommendation of setting up a cell in the Prime Minister's Office to monitor the progress of the schemes for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

The committee, in a report presented in Parliament on Wednesday, pointed out that the programmes and schemes meant for development of the SCs/STs had not yielded the desired results.

It sought information on the steps taken by the Ministries concerned for proper utilisation of funds for the schemes.

The report says that the committee members were not convinced by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment's reply that a monitoring cell at the Prime Minister's Office may not be so urgent, as the Planning Commission and the Ministry reviewed the progress of the schemes on a monthly and quarterly basis.

The committee said the problems faced in implementation of the projects should be brought to the notice of the State Governments that lagged behind.

The report also took serious note of the Government's "slackness" in drafting a national policy for tribals.

It directed that a time-bound action be taken on the matter.

THE HINDU

17/12/76

Caste Cocktail

State governments could be allowed to divide Dalits into sub-categories

THE Centre's proposal to allow state governments to divide Dalits into sub-categories, depending on how much they have gained from reservations, stems from the widespread sentiment that some groups have cornered a disproportionate amount of benefits. The proposal would put in place a bar on how much reservation can be granted to groups that constitute the Dalits. While the desire to ensure that benefits of reservation are evenly spread among Dalits is laudable, the proposal is likely to founder. The biggest hurdle is the Supreme Court, which has struck down creation of categories within Dalits. The court ruled that the Andhra Pradesh government's proposal to split the scheduled castes into sub-groups and specify how much reservation they were entitled to, violated Articles 14, 15, 16 and 341 of the Constitution. Importantly, the Andhra government move was also fuelled, at least on paper, by the concern that the dominant Malas were bagging a major chunk of quota benefits. There have been similar moves earlier in Punjab and Haryana to divide the SCs into further categories.

The Centre can, of course, get around the court order by amending the Constitution or by placing the new legislation in the Ninth Schedule where it would be secure from legal challenge. But such a move is likely to have several negative implications. First, it will make the already complex quota system even messier. Second, it is likely to generate a severe backlash from dominant groups who would not like to see a limit on their quota. In addition, Dalit leaders will portray the Centre's move as a ploy to divide their unity. Finally, further sub-divisions within the SC category might end up perpetuating caste loyalties and rivalries. Reservations were meant to cease 10 years after the Constitution came into effect, but more than 50 years later caste continues to play a crucial role. A better way of ensuring equitable distribution of quota benefits to Dalits would be to identify an economically determined 'creamy layer' or individuals who have benefited the most from reservations. This has already been done for the other backward classes following the Supreme Court judgment on the Mandal commission report. There is no reason why this cannot be extended to cover Dalits.

BJP VOTES IN FAVOUR OF LEGISLATION

LS passes quota Bill

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec 21. — The Lok Sabha today passed the contentious constitutional amendment Bill providing for reservations for the SCs/STs and “socially and educationally backward” classes in private, unaided educational institutions after a day-long heated discussion.

When the Bill was put to the vote, there were 331 votes in favour of it with a mere 17 in opposition.

Clearly, the UPA government's intense and frantic negotiations to muster the numbers paid off.

Despite their misgivings, the dissenting parties, including the BJP, voted in favour of the legislation since they did not want to be perceived as the “stumbling block” in the way of such a transparently populist move.

Apart from bringing its critical allies — the Left and the RJD — on board, the government appeared bolstered by the backing of some key NDA allies like the JD-U.

The members showed up following Whips issued to them by their parties. The Bill required a two-thirds majority to be passed as it sought to overturn an August Supreme Court judgment, calling the quotas in private educational institutions unconstitutional.

Fifteen members belonging to the

BJP, Congress, BSP, SP and the RJD, exposed as having taken money in two sting operations, could not vote as they had been directed by the Speaker not to attend the House till a probe against them was over and a decision taken.

Though the principal Opposition party, the BJP, had earlier said that it would oppose the Bill, it finally endorsed it, not wishing to be seen as a “spoiler” by the SCs, STs, OBCs and minorities.

The Bill's passage will enable students belonging to the SCs, STs and OBCs to avail themselves of the benefit of quotas in government as well as private colleges from the coming academic session.

Speaking during a clause-by-clause assessment of the Bill, the BJP's Mr VK Malhotra criticised the government for excluding minority institutions from the Bill's purview. His amendments, however, were rejected.

Replying, HRD minister Mr Arjun Singh assured the House that reservations for OBCs would be addressed in due course. The minister explained the circumstances necessitating the amendment Bill that, he said, would “serve a social cause”. He said India was a secular state and proud to be so, pointing out that there were more Muslims in India than in Pakistan.

Quota benefit not for upper caste woman marrying SC/ST

NEW DELHI, Dec. 21. — The Supreme Court has held that a woman from an upper caste Hindu family cannot contest an election in a reserved constituency if she has married a man belonging to a Scheduled Caste or Tribe.

Setting aside a Delhi High Court verdict, a Bench comprising Mr Justice SB Sinha and Mr Justice PK Balasubramaniyan said the acceptance of the upper caste woman by an SC or ST family would not qualify her for the privilege.

“It is, therefore, beyond doubt or dispute that a high-caste Hindu individual not subjected to any social or educational backwardness in his or her life, by reason of mar-

riage alone cannot *ipso facto* become a member of a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe,” the Bench said.

Ms Meera Kanwaria, a defeated candidate in the elections to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi from Subhash Nagar, had challenged the Delhi High Court judgment upholding the victory of an upper caste woman, Ms Sunita, in the reserved seat.

Ms Sunita was married to a member of a Scheduled Caste. Ms Kanwaria had contended that her rival was ineligible as she was not a Scheduled Caste candidate by birth. Ms Sunita had also filed the wrong affidavit, she alleged. — PTI

LEFT, RJD & BJP HAVE MISGIVINGS

Quota Bill introduced in House

21/12
SP, J. Carter & Partner

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 20. — A constitutional amendment Bill, envisaging reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in unaided private educational institutions, was introduced in the Lok Sabha today amid misgivings expressed by the Left parties, RJD and the BJP.

The Constitution (104th Amendment) Bill, piloted by the HRD minister, Mr Arjun Singh, excludes minority educational institutions from its purview.

At present, reservations of seats for SCs, STs and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) for admissions to educational institutions are contingent upon the provisions of Article 15(4) of the Constitution. The number of seats available in aided or state maintained institutions, particularly in respect of professional education, is limited in contrast to those in private, unaided institutions. The new Bill seeks to amplify Article 15 to provide for similar reservations for SCs, STs and OBCs in unaided educational institutions.

The new clause will enable Parliament as well as state legislatures to set forth laws for this purpose, Mr Singh said.

According to him, Article 30(1) provides all minorities with the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their

choice and it is essential that such rights are protected.

Institutions declared by the state to be minority ones are, therefore, omitted from the purview of the new provision. Mr Singh said the ultimate objective was to provide reservations to these segments of the people in educational institutions.

Mr DP Yadav (RJD) wanted the government to allude to the "socially and economically backward" classes in the Bill. He also felt OBCs would not be able to take advantage of reservations in elite institutions. Mr Ram Gopal Yadav (SP) said the government had made it clear that OBCs would be benefited.

Mr V Radhakrishnan of the CPI-M, supported by Mr CK Chandrappan of the CPI, contended that it should be left to the states to identify a minority institution.

But with its allies divided on the issue, the BJP appeared to be wavering on opposing the Bill. Though the party iterated that it would oppose the exemption given to minority institutions in the Bill, moving amendments for it to be deleted, the party appeared to be in two minds on pressing for a division lest it should be accused of putting up obstructions.

The BJP has issued a Whip to its members to be present in the Lok Sabha tomorrow when the Bill is expected to come up for voting.

Status Quo Not To Change For Existing Beneficiaries

SC verdict rules out 5% Muslim quota in jobs

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 4 JANUARY

IN A development that could dampen the enthusiasm of the Sultans of appeasement to come up with promises that could be challenged by the judiciary, the Supreme Court on Wednesday brought into force the Andhra Pradesh High Court judgement, quashing 5% Muslim quota in government jobs and educational institutions.

However, a Bench headed by Chief Justice YK Sabharwal

gave relief to those who have already availed the benefit of the controversial ordinance, directing that the status quo be maintained relating to appointments in public services and admissions in educational institutions. Admitting a bunch of appeals against the high court judgement, the Bench referred the matter for consideration before a Constitution Bench.

The BJP hailed the decision and said it was a verdict against the appeasement politics. "This is the fourth slap on the face of the Congress and its brand of

politics. The court spoke against the quota in AP and AMU four times," BJP leader Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said.

It may be recalled that the Congress government, acting on its pre-poll promise, cleared 5% quota for Muslims, who account for 9.2% of the state's population, barely three days after getting recommendations from a government panel. The decision was challenged in the Andhra Pradesh High Court.

Disapproving religion-based reservation, a five-member AP High Court Bench, headed by

Court will not stay ruling against A.P. quota law

Admissions, appointments already made on the basis of the legislation will not be disturbed

Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Andhra Pradesh Government suffered a setback on Wednesday with the Supreme Court refusing to stay the operation of the judgment of a full Bench of the High Court, which struck down the legislation providing for a five per cent quota for Muslims in public appointments and admissions to educational institutions.

A three-judge Bench comprising Chief Justice Y.K. Sabharwal, Justice C.K. Thakker and Justice R.V. Raveendran said: "We are not inclined to stay the operation of the impugned judgment and make operational a

law, which has been invalidated by the High Court."

It, however, granted limited relief, ordering that admissions already made or public appointments, if any, made by the government on the basis of the law be not disturbed. Considering that "essential questions of public importance are involved in the matter" the Bench admitted the appeals and directed that these be placed before a Constitution Bench.

Appearing for the State, senior counsel Fali Nariman argued that the High Court had struck down the law on the ground that the State Backward

Classes Commission had not collected adequate material. He quoted Article 16(4), which says,

"Nothing in this Article shall prevent the State from making any provision for reservation in matters of promotion to any class or classes of posts in the services under the State in favour of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes which, in the opinion of the State, are not adequately represented in the services under the State."

The High Court did not go into this aspect, counsel said. Reservation for a class of people not adequately represented was permissible and such empower-

ment was not illegal.

The Bench, after perusing the Commission report, told Mr. Nariman that Muslims formed nine per cent of the Andhra Pradesh population. Going by the report, "Can we say that Muslims are not adequately represented in the services because there is only a marginal difference in the percentage?"

Appearing for students, senior counsel Harish Salve said the law was not enacted under Article 16(4) as Clause 3 "mentions only about social, educational and economic backwardness" and the High Court was right in not consid-

ering the scope of Article 16(4).

In its special leave petition assailing the November 7, 2005 judgment, the State said the High Court ought to have noticed that the Commission had conducted an extensive survey, examined several documents and heard objections.

The impugned judgment resulted in chaos in the administration, particularly among Muslim students who were admitted under the reservation quota, pursuant to an ordinance, and their career was in jeopardy, the SLP said and sought quashing of the judgment and an interim stay of its operation.

Get set for quota, India Inc told

Govt Firm On Pvt Job Reservations Law

By Subodh Ghildiyal/TNN

New Delhi: Flashing the law ministry's stand that government can extend job quotas to the private sector even without having to amend the constitution, the ministry of social justice has started pushing reluctant corporates to act on their own to ward off state intervention.

The point is learnt to have been conveyed by social justice minister Meira Kumar to Infosys chief N R Narayanamurthy and Thermax boss Anu Aga. In both the interactions, the minister was learnt to have told her guests that continued resistance would leave the government with no option but to bring in a law to push the quota jurisdiction to the private sector.

She is expected to impress the same upon Rahul Bajaj when he comes calling in mid-January.

Speaking to TOI, Meira Kumar refused to disclose what had really transpired between her and her visitors from the corporate sector. She, however, said that government was making a renewed pitch for voluntary action on the part of industry. "I am still trying for voluntary action." Kumar also said that she wanted the industrialists—22 of whom had told her in June 2005 that they were ready to give training and scholarships to SCs\STs and the poor in return for a pledge not to impose the quota—to "form a council to find a solution to the issue".

The group of ministers

(GoM) headed by agriculture minister Sharad Pawar, which has been mandated to draw the roadmap for implementing the private sector quota, is supposed to meet around the same time. Already, however, there is little doubt that the view of the



Meira Kumar N R Murthy Anu Aga

law ministry has strengthened the resolve of those campaigning for a private sector quota.

The social justice minister also made it plain that the government was not satisfied with the offer of industry to provide training to the target categories. "The real question is about absorption after learning different trades. They have to be given jobs. Even the government provides skills training," she said.

The GoM which comprises strong quota votaries like railway minister Lalu Prasad and steel minister Ramvilas Paswan, had at its last meeting sought opinion on the feasibility of making a law from Fali S Nariman, Justice (retd) K Ramaswamy and attorney general Milon Banerji.

Nariman and Banerjee held that the law for extending quotas to the private sector was not possible within the present constitutional framework. Justice Ramaswamy concurred and even drafted the amendment which he felt was necessary.