

Business Standard

Gujarat rolls back 10 % quota for higher castes

The BJP-led Gujarat government on Friday suspended the implementation of the 10 per cent reservation in educational institutions and government jobs for the economically weaker sections among the upper caste communities it had announced earlier in the wake of the Patidar quota stir.

The opposition has slammed the government for "misleading" the people.

A notification to suspend the implementation was issued by the general administration department in the evening directing all government departments to refrain from providing jobs as well as admissions in educational institutions to those under the Economically Backward Classes category.

The decision to give 10 per cent reservation to the upper caste people whose family income was less than Rs six lakh a year was taken by the previous Anandiben Patel government in a bid to derail the Patidar agitation for OBC reservation benefits.

Both the Gujarat High Court and a division bench of the Supreme Court had disapproved the move, calling it unconstitutional, and the matter was pending before a larger bench of the apex court following an appeal of the state government. The government had earlier said it would fight tooth and nail in the apex court to ensure the quota was implemented.

Strongly reacting to the decision, Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly Shankarsinh Vaghela and AICC spokesman Shaktisinh Gohil said the suspension of the order was a fait accompli.

The government had taken the decision only to "fool and mislead" the people knowing well that it would never stand legal scrutiny since the Constitution did not provide for reservation on economic criteria.

They said if the government was really serious and sincere in helping the economically weaker sections of society, it should have adopted a bill in the State Assembly to this effect.

"But it chose not to take any such step and only played a gimmick on the people of the state," Gohil said.

Patel quota stir leaders Hardik Patel and Atul Patel, who then had rejected the EBC quota announcement as a "lollipop" offer to the Patels, described the suspension of the quota decision as a "crude joke" on the three crore upper caste people of the state.

Both the Congress and the Patidar quota stir leaders demanded the State Government compensate for the expenses made and the harassment suffered so far by lakhs of upper caste people to obtain the EBC certificates from the government agencies to avail the reservation benefits.

"The BJP government will get the reply for playing such a crude joke on the people in the next Assembly elections," Hardik Patel said.