

## **Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah favours job quota in private sector**

BENGALURU: With assembly polls less than two years away, chief minister Siddaramaiah has called for a Constitutional amendment to provide for a job quota for OBCs in the private sector, reviving an issue that witnessed animated discussions during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections.

Industry captains, however, do not seem to endorse the CM's view. Speaking at a function in Bengaluru on Saturday, the CM said OBCs have been deprived of jobs because of thinning opportunities in PSUs and the government sector, while the job market is booming in the private sector. Only a job quota in private sector will ensure social justice to other backward caste (OBC) candidates, he said.

Biocon founder Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw cautioned the government that if the number of jobs is increasing in the private sector, it is due to fewer restrictions.

"The world today is facing the challenge of jobless growth, and if Karnataka or India is adding jobs, we should be happy about it. Jobs will go to countries where there are no restrictions, By seeking to put restrictions on jobs, we will only end up killing something that is blossoming," Shaw said.

The Congress had floated such an idea in the run up to the Lok Sabha polls two years ago. Infosys co-founder Nandan Nilekani, who had contested from Bangalore South, however, had rejected the suggestion. "When it comes to the private sector however, we should encourage private companies to be more proactive about inclusion and not over-regulate them. The focus should be on job creation --on creating more opportunity, rather than just dividing up existing opportunities," Nilekani wrote in his blog.

Shekar Viswanathan, vicechairman at Toyota Kirloskar, felt a job quota in the private sector is not going to bestow any particular advantage on OBC candidates. "The reservation in our education system has worked well, and as a result, they (OBCs) are as skilled and competent as any other person to compete for private sector jobs. A quota for them will not serve much purpose except pitting one group of people against another and creating friction among them," he said.

TV Mohandas Pai, chairman of Manipal Global Education Services, slammed the idea and said the very suggestion of a quota system in private sector indicated failure of governance in the state.

"The (state) government should have invested in infrastructure and put in place the right policies to drive investments, but this government wasted the first two years. The government has taken some initiatives in its third year, but it will take about two to three years to show results," Pai said.

Siddaramaiah has cultivated an image of being a leader of OBCs, Dalits, and minorities, and is trying to guard these votes from drifting away towards the BJP or the JD(S).