

Maha: Hindi mandatory 3rd language for classes 1-5

Maharashtra Navnirman Sena slams move, to oppose decision

PTI, MUMBAI: Maharashtra Government has decided that Hindi as a third language will be mandatory for students in classes 1 to 5 in Marathi and English-medium schools across the state, in a departure from the practice of studying two languages.

NEP IMPOSITION

Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) president Raj Thackeray slammed the move, adding his party will oppose the decision vehemently and ensure that it is not implemented.

The three-language formula for classes 1 to 5 is a part of the new curriculum implementation under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

The state school education department has declared a phase-wise implementation plan of the new curriculum framework designed as per the NEP 2020 recommendations for school education.

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will not allow the central government's current efforts to 'Hindi-fy' everything, to succeed in this state," Thackeray said in a post on X.

"Hindi is not a national language. It is a state language like other languages in the country. Why should it be taught in Maharashtra from the very beginning? Whatever your trilingual formula is, limit it to government affairs, do not bring it to education," he said.

"Why have you started imposing the language of another region on Maharashtra? The very principle of linguistic regionalization is being undermined," the MNS chief said.

"We are Hindus but not Hindi! If you try to paint Maharashtra as Hindi, then there is bound to be a struggle in Maharashtra," Thackeray said.

The MNS chief wondered why Hindi was being forced on Maharashtra. "Will you force Hindi in a

southern state? If you do, the governments there will be outraged," he said.

"Today they are forcing languages upon us, tomorrow they will issue other such fatwas," the MNS chief said.

The Opposition Congress slammed the state government, saying the move amounts to the imposition of Hindi.

Currently, only Marathi and English are being taught as mandatory languages from Classes 1 to 4 in these schools.

According to a Government Resolution (GR), Hindi as a third language will be compulsory from Class 1 to 5 from the next academic year. The new syllabus as per NEP will be implemented for Class 1 in 2025-26.

For Classes 2, 3, 4 and 6, the policy will be implemented in 2026-27, for Classes 5, 9 and 11 from 2027-

28, and for Classes 8, 10 and 12 from 2028-29, the GR said.

All schools in the state, other than Marathi and English medium, are currently following the three-language formula. For such schools, the language of the medium, English and Marathi will be taught, said the GR.

For Std VI to X, the language policy will be as per the state curriculum, it said.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said the state has already implemented the NEP.

Marathi has already been made compulsory, he said. Hindi should also be learnt as it is a means of communication in the entire country, he said.

Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar said the move goes against the 'Marathi asmita' (pride).

"There would have been no problem if Hindi were an optional language. But making it mandatory will hurt Marathi sentiments. Can we demand Marathi as a third language in Madhya Pradesh or Uttar Pradesh," Wadettiwar said.

COOLING OFF



A boy takes bath to cool-off during a hot summer day near the Taj Mahal in Agra, on Thursday

K'taka caste census: Cabinet meet ends without any major decision

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PTI, BENGALURU: Amid internal differences over the Social and Educational Survey report, popularly known as 'caste census', a special meeting of Karnataka cabinet that was convened on Thursday to discuss it, ended inconclusive, without any major decision.

However, denying any internal rifts, ministers who attended the meeting said they discussed the parameters used for the survey, and sought for more information and technical details from senior officials.

The cabinet will once again discuss the survey report on May 2 and decide on it.

"The cabinet has discussed the report in detail and it was felt that more information and technical details were required for discussion. So, senior officials have been asked to provide it. The discussion today was incomplete," Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil said.

Briefing reporters, he said that the discussions happened in a cordial atmosphere, and several matters like population, backwardness, the parameters that were used during the social and educational survey, the economic parameters that were considered, were all discussed to an extent.

As discussions were incomplete, it will be discussed once again. "As the next cabinet meeting will be held in MM Hills in Chamarajanagar district with focus on developmental issues of the region, it has been decided to discuss this matter once again in the cabinet that will be held on May 2, and make a final decision," he added.

According to sources, some ministers expressed reservations about the survey report, citing concerns expressed from several quarters calling it unscientific and outdated, and about undercounting. Following this, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah asked all ministers to give their opinion in writing or verbally.

Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy, said that the chief minister had asked ministers to give their opinion before the next cabinet meeting.

Though there were reports that a couple of ministers spoke in an "upset tone" during the discussion on the survey report, expressing their reservation about it, this was not confirmed by other ministers present in the cabinet meeting.

Heavy rain, thunderstorm in parts of Himachal

PTI, SHIMLA: Heavy rain accompanied by thunderstorms and hailstorms lashed several parts of Himachal Pradesh, uprooting trees and disrupting power supply as several areas in Shimla remained without electricity for hours.

Pine and other trees fell on the huts of the migrants due to heavy storm at night in Hamirpur's Barsar.

An eight-year-old child, identified as Abhishek Kumar, died after a tree fell on a hut while he was sleeping inside. The child was taken to Barsar Civil Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

Recovering Pope Francis visits Rome prison to keep annual Holy Week appointment

AP, VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis visited Rome's central prison Thursday and met with dozens of inmates as he kept an Easter season appointment to spend Holy Thursday among the least fortunate, even as he continues recovering from a life-threatening bout of pneumonia.

Francis met for nearly a half-hour with some 70 inmates at the Regina Coeli prison in Rome's Trastevere neighbourhood. It's a prison Francis has visited before to perform the annual Holy Thursday ritual of washing the feet of 12 people to re-enact Christ's gesture of humble service of washing the feet of



Pope Francis talks to journalists at the end of his visit to the Regina Coeli penitentiary in Rome on Holy Thursday

12 apostles before his crucifixion.

Francis told the inmates he couldn't do it this year, given his health, but wanted to nevertheless be with them and "do what Jesus did on Holy Thursday".

The fact that the 88-year-old pope kept the appointment, when he is under doctors' orders to take it easy and avoid crowds, was a clear sign of the importance he places on prison ministry and the need for

priests to serve those most on the margins. That is all the more true during the 2025 Holy Year, which both opened and will close with special papal events for prison inmates.

"Every time I enter one of these places, I ask myself: Why them and not me?" Francis told reporters outside the prison in his first off-the-cuff comments since he got sick.

Francis is expected to make at least some other Easter-time appearances over the coming days, even as cardinals will preside in his place during Holy Week's busy events.

He made a surprise cameo at the end of Palm Sunday Mass last weekend.

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BEEF CRISIS LEAVES GOA REELING BEFORE EASTER

For vendors and traders, Easter usually means high demand, but this year, the shortage has left many struggling to meet expectations, resulting in lost income and growing tension in the markets.

Meanwhile, in Panjim, shortage of meat continued as the Corporation of the City of Panaji (CCP) is yet to provide temporary sheds to six displaced meat vendors.

In January this year, the Supreme Court had directed the CCP to allot fixed spots to displaced meat vendors in a temporary fish market in Panjim, after the building where the meat vendors were occupying was demolished.

When contacted, Qureshi Meat Traders' Association president Mannasab Bepari said, "We are yet to restart our business since we were displaced in August last year. The meat lovers have to either go to Santa Cruz or Mapusa to buy beef and meat. Many meat lovers faced hardships during Eid and now again it will be repeated during Easter. Our livelihood has been affected and we have been requesting the CCP to provide us temporary sheds in the south-east portion of the shed built for the fish vendors as per the Supreme Court order."

According to Bepari, the CCP commissioner Clen Madeira has written to them stating that the work of construction of temporary shops for meat vendors in the municipal fish market shed is already tendered and once the tendering process is completed, the work order will be issued to the concerned agency for carrying out the work.

WON'T DENOTIFY WAQF PROPERTIES: CENTRE

The bench noted Mehta, appearing for the Centre, has also said that till the next date of hearing, Waqf properties, including "Waqf by user" already registered or declared by way of notification, shall not be disturbed and denotified.

The bench then granted a week's time to the Centre to file a preliminary response to the pleas challenging the validity of the contentious Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 and posted the matter on May 5.

"If your lordships will say something about "Waqf by user", what will be the fallout?" Mehta said.

He added, "We, as a government, and Parliament, are answerable to the people."

The CJ said if the registration of any Waqf property had taken place under the erstwhile 1995 Act, then those properties can't be denotified till further hearing.

"The rising costs, with boneless beef now selling for Rs 500—Rs550/kg (previously Rs 450), loam has gone up from Rs 500 to Rs 550/kg, and undercut has increased from Rs 600 to Rs 650/kg — Shabbir Shaikh, another vendor

"We have the right to eat what we want. Denying us access to beef, especially during Easter, is unfair. The government must step in immediately — A shopper at the SGPDA market

The apex court, while hearing the matter on Wednesday, proposed to stay certain key provisions of the Act, including the power to denotify properties declared as Waqf by courts and inclusion of non-Muslims in central Waqf council and boards.

On Thursday, Mehta asked whether the court might consider staying, directly or indirectly, the Act based upon some prima facie or tentative reading of some of the sections.

"If your lordships are going to stay a statutory provision," Mehta said, "it by itself is rare. We will have to take your lordships to the history of legislation, followed by amendment."

He said the government received several representations, which ultimately resulted in the amended Act.

Opposing the stay, the law officer referred to certain instances and said private properties were usurped as Waqf in several places.

Terminating it a "considered piece of legislation", Mehta said the pleas were filed before the Presidential assent and taken immediately by the bench.

"We are not deciding the matter finally," the bench said. Mehta argued that staying the provisions of the Act may be a "harsh step" and said the government should be allowed to place its preliminary reply.

"Allow me to place within a week my preliminary reply with some materials, documents and statutes to show," he said, "and in one week, nothing will change".

Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, representing a State government, said "Heavens are not going to fall if the interim order is not passed for a week or so."

Mehta further assured of not making appointments in the respective Waqf boards even if some of the States were not before the court.

The CJ said, "We don't want the position to change. Parliament makes laws, the executive decides and the judiciary interprets."

The bench has also decided to hear only five of the total number of pleas before it and titled the case: "In Re: Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025".

About 72 petitions, including those by AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi, All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), Anwar Basha former chairman Karnataka State Board of AUQAF represented by advocate Tariq Ahmed, Congress MPs Imran Pratapgarhi and Mohammad Jawed, were filed against the law.

Senior counsel including Kapil Sibal, Abhishek Singhvi, Huzefa Ahmadi appear for the petitioners in the case.

While appointing three lawyers as the nodal counsel on Thursday, the bench asked the advocates to decide among themselves who was going to argue.

The petitioners were allowed to file their rejoinders to the Centre's reply within five days of the service of the government's response.

"We clarify that the next hearing (May 5) will be for the preliminary objections and for an interim order," the bench said.

The bench said a writ petition challenging the 1995 Waqf Act and the amendment made in 2013 should be

separately shown in the causelist.

On Wednesday, the bench was miffed over the inclusion of non-Muslims in the central Waqf council and boards and asked the Centre whether it was willing to include Muslims in Hindu religious trusts.

The CJ had proposed to issue the notice and to pass an interim order, saying it will "balance the equities".

Observing some provisions could have "grave ramifications", particularly those that potentially undermine judicially recognised Waqf properties, the CJ proposed the order.

"The properties declared as Waqfs by the courts should not be de-notified, whether they are by Waqf-by-user or Waqf by deed while the court is hearing the challenge to the Waqf Amendment Act 2025," he proposed.

"Waqf by user" refers to a practice where a property is recognised as a religious or charitable endowment (Waqf) based on its long-term, uninterrupted use for such purposes, even if there isn't a formal, written declaration of Waqf by the owner.

The Centre notified the Act which received assent of the President on April 5.

INDIAN-ORIGIN SCIENTIST DISCOVERS SIGNS OF LIFE ON DISTANT PLANET

On Earth, the chemicals dimethyl sulfide (DMS) and dimethyl disulfide are produced only by life, mostly microscopic marine algae called phytoplankton.

The researchers emphasised caution, saying that more observations were needed to confirm these findings, and that they were not announcing a definitive discovery.

But the implications could be huge, according to Nikku Madhusudhan, a Cambridge University astrophysicist and lead author of the study, published in The Astrophysical Journal Letters.

"What we are finding at this point are hints of possible biological activity outside the solar system," he told journalists.

"Frankly, I think this is the closest we have come to seeing a feature that we can attribute to life."

But outside experts pointed to disputes over previous discoveries about the exoplanet, adding that these chemicals could have been created by unknown means having nothing to do with life.

More than eight times the mass of Earth and 2.5 times as big, K2-18b is rare among the roughly 6,000 exoplanets discovered so far in that it orbits its star in a habitable or "goldilocks" zone.

This means it is neither too hot nor too cold to have liquid water, considered the most important ingredient for life.

Telescopes observe such far-off exoplanets when they cross in front of their star, allowing astronomers to analyse how molecules block the light streaming through their atmosphere.

In 2023, the Webb telescope detected methane and carbon dioxide in K2-18b's atmosphere, the first time such carbon-based molecules were detected on an exoplanet in a habitable zone.

It also detected weak signals of the chemical DMS, lead-

ing astronomers to turn Webb towards the planet again a year ago, this time using its mid-infrared instrument to detect different wavelengths of light.

They found much stronger signs of the chemicals, though still well below the "five sigma" threshold of statistical significance scientists seek for such discoveries.

Even if the results are confirmed, it would not necessarily mean that the planet is home to life.

Last year, scientists found traces of DMS on a comet, which suggested it can be produced in non-organic ways and is perhaps not a "biosignature".

However the concentration of the chemical observed on K2-18b appears to be thousands of times stronger than levels on Earth, likely suggesting a biological origin, Madhusudhan said.

MISSIONARIES OF CHARITY TO SHUT DOWN IN PANJIM

We will hand over the premises to the Assistência de Goa and go wherever we are sent to do the service." Assistência de Goa, the charity organisation, is the owner of the building in which the Missionaries of Charity are housed currently.

When asked about the reasons for closing down the institute, Sr Rosaria remarked, "Panjim is now rich and it appears that we are not required. We are going where there are poor people."

The institute has begun relocating its 44 inmates, with 26 already moved to Carambolim and Cota-Fatorpa, where the organisation has its presence. The remaining 18 will be relocated on April 24, just four days before the closure.

Although the institute stopped offering children for adoption approximately 10 years ago, they facilitated nearly 500 adoptions. "We brought joy to the lives of these children. Today they are married and are visiting the centre with their children, to meet us," said Sr Rosaria.

It is learnt that the Missionaries of Charity Superior General M Joseph wrote to the Assistência de Goa stating that it will return the entire premises. The Superior General has also expressed her gratitude for having the privilege of serving the "poorest of the poor" in Panjim since 1976.

"They (The Sisters of Mother Teresa) met the Archbishop and informed him that they want to discontinue because Panjim does not require a home like this. People are well off in Panjim and they want to serve the poorest of the poor. We are also surprised by their decision," said one of the trustees of Assistência de Goa.

SHOW CAUSE 'RED CARD' FOR DYSP OVER FOOTBALL FIASCO

Borkar has been issued a show cause notice, asking him to give an explanation within seven days as to why appropriate action should not be taken against him for the lapses.

When contacted, SP Sawant said, "It is administration matter. Whatever is required to maintain discipline will be followed."

