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New Panchamasali Mahasabha may end up dividing community

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Bengaluru: Formation of the new All-India Panchamasali Lingayat Mahasabha (AIPLM) could have major political repercussions in the state.

Till now, the All-India Veerashaiva Mahasabha (AIVM) has been the sole forum for the community. But with AIPLM, AIVM's hold over the Veerashaiva-Lingayat community may diminish.

"How long can we remain under the control of AIVM which is largely controlled by Veerashaivas? It's time to take control of our destiny. The practices of Veerashaivas and Lingayats are different. It's time for different forums for development," said



STAYING PUT: Basava Jaya Mrutyunjaya Swami, spearhead of the Panchamasali agitation, with supporters at Freedom Park on Monday

CENTRAL LEADERSHIP EXPLOITING SITUATION

By dividing the community and pitting the sub-sect which has 14 sitting BJP MLAs among the 34 Lingayat legislators in the party, the central leadership appears to be exploiting the situation

— A political observer

sub-sects. This rivalry appears to have sown the seeds for a separate forum with Panchamasalis feeling left out," said a political observer.

According to community leaders, the two mutts spearheading the reservation agitation for Panchamasalis are relatively new and have been propped up by politicians. Kudalasangama and Harihar mutts were created around 20 years ago. "These newly created mutts and separate forums will only serve those who want to fester a division among Lingayats. Those encouraging the divide will do so for vote banks. It won't be for the overall Lingayat community," said former bureaucrat and secretary of the Lingayat Dharma Horata Samiti SM Jamdar.

However, Kashapannavar believes there is widespread acceptance among Lingayats for the new forum with over 400 smaller mutts across north Karnataka. "Our intent is not to break the community. There are 108 sub-sects under the Veerashaiva-Lingayat community. We can't wait under a single forum to press for our demands," he said.

AIVM appears to be cautious, with its general secretary and Congress MLA Eshwar Khandre suggesting he's yet to secure information on the new forum. But the bigger conspiracy being speculated is that the BJP central leadership is trying to exploit Panchamasalis to destabilise Yediyurappa's sway over the community and force him to step down.

Yatnal is Cong's B team, says Nirani

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A day after BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal and Basava Jaya Mrutyunjaya Swami of Kudala Sangama cornered the government by holding a massive rally of Panchamasalis to demand reservation under the 2A category, ministers CC Patil and Murugesha Nirani, who are also Panchamasali Lingayats, launched a counter-attack. They accused the seer of playing into the hands of Yatnal and former Congress MLA Vijayanand Kashappannavar, who they said had hijacked the movement for political gain.

"It has become clear now that the seer is under the control of Yatnal and Kashappannavar. His decision to continue the dharna till March 4 was prompted by the duo. It is high time the seer stopped listening to a few people and acted as per the wish of the majority of the community," Patil said.

Nirani said: "How can you (the seer) take a decision to continue his dharna without consulting the community leaders? Has the community given you the Power of Attorney?" He also slammed Yatnal for using the movement to attack Yediyurappa and his family and accused him of acting like the 'B' team of

He's an aggressive Hindu leader: KSE

RDPR minister KS Eshwarappa praised Yatnal, saying he is an aggressive Hindu leader. However, he said Yatnal should stop attacking the CM in public. Eshwarappa backed the Panchamasali reservation protest and asked the seer to wait till the government forms a committee. "Many communities are demanding reservation. We discussed this in a cabinet meeting held recently...", he added.

Congress. He dared Yatnal to resign from his assembly membership and get re-elected before speaking ill of BJP functionaries.

The ministers also questioned the election of Kashapannavar as national president of All-India Panchamasali Lingayat Mahasabha. "It is a unilateral decision by a few people, which is not accepted by the community. What is the contribution of Kashappannavar and his family to the Panchamasali community? Why did he not make a similar demand when Congress was in office," Nirani asked.

The ministers expressed solidarity with the CM, whom Yatnal and Kashappannavar attacked during the rally.

POLITICS & POLICY

the first national president Vijayanand Kashappannavar.

However, political observers and experts believe AIPLM is more a political decision with long-standing, internal rivalry between Panchamasalis and Banajiga sub-sects of Lingayats.

While most Panchamasalis are landed gentry, Banajigas are a mercantile class. "Though Panchamasalis are kingmakers, Banajigas and other allied classes like Gani-gas have been kings. There have been six CMs from the Banajiga community in Karnataka, with only one Panchamasali and two others, including Yediyurappa, from other smaller