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Lingayat board: A self-serving move

The recent decision by Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa to set up two development corporations, one for Marathas and the other for Veerashaiva-Lingayats, has more to do with political exigencies than with the uplift of these communities, which are by no means backward. The Maratha Development Board, political observers have noted, seems to have been set up to entice members of this community who form a sizeable population in Basavakalyana Assembly constituency where by-polls are due, following the death of the sitting MLA. It is no secret that Yediyurappa is lobbying for the BJP ticket for his son B Y Vijayendra and would like to leave no stone unturned to ensure his victory. The formation of the Karnataka Veerashaiva-Lingayat Development Corporation (KVLDC) appears to be part of a larger strategy to woo this dominant community to which Yediyurappa belongs, in the backdrop of intense speculation that the BJP wants him to step down as Chief Minister.

While the stated objective of KVLDC, which is being registered under the Companies Act, is to help economically, socially and educationally backward people from the community, it is intriguing that a whopping Rs 500 crore has been allotted, without any budgetary sanction,



**The Rs 500-cr
allotment
is not even
backed by data**

even before the Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association have been framed. While it is true that there are poor even among the Lingayats, allocating a huge sum without a proper study of the community's socio-economic conditions is wrong. Indeed, it is wrong to set up caste-based corporations for political gains. Worse, it has opened the floodgates to similar demands from the other dominant community, the Vokkaligas, too.

Previous Chief Ministers like HD Kumaraswamy and Siddaramaiah too are guilty of having set up such boards, but Yediyurappa's decision appears to have been largely motivated by the need to consolidate his own position within his community, which is said to constitute about 17% of the state's population. If push comes to shove in the party on the matter of his continuation in office, he may be forced to make a tough call, in which case community support will come in handy. At a time when the government is forced to borrow an additional Rs 33,000 crore to bridge the revenue deficit arising out of the Covid-19 situation, it is unfortunate that the resources of the state are being stretched to meet political ends. Most importantly, setting up of such caste-based development boards goes against the concept of equitable distribution of resources and inclusive growth of the entire society, especially the socially disadvantaged sections, who have a legitimate claim to a larger pie of the finances.