On Democracy Day, CM champions 'pluralism' to defeat divisive forces

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Chief minister Siddaramaiah, while participating in a human chain event on International Democracy Day, Sunday urged people of the state to celebrate constitutional pluralism and to stand up to divisive forces. The event, featuring over 2 million participants across the state's 31 districts, was aimed at strengthening unity while sending a message to destructive elements.

POLITICS & POLICY

Siddaramaiah emphasised India's democratic heritage, citing examples from Buddha and Basavanna's times. He stressed the importance of economic and social democracy alongside political freedom, referencing a speech by BR Ambedkar.

The CM highlighted govt efforts to teach constitutional values and implement pro-poor programmes and criticised divisive forces, particularly BJP, for obstructing social justice. He said India had a form of democracy and parliamentary systems during the times of Buddha and Basavanna, with 'Anubhava Mantapa' being a symbol of early democratic institutions. Referring to Ambedkar's speech

IN RHYTHM: Siddaramaiah and other functionaries at International Day of Democracy celebrations at Vidhana Soudha on Sunday

on Nov 25, 1949, he said political freedom is meaningful only when economic and social democracy is achieved. As long as inequality exists, political freedom will lack real significance. He stressed the importance of values enshrined in the Preamble. He said efforts are on to teach and instil these values in schools and colleges and his govt is working towards equality by implementing programmes that empower the poor and middle-class from all castes and religions.

He condemned divisive forces that misuse the concept of unity, calling them enemies of social justice and equality. He urged peope to stand firm

against them. He targeted BJP, accusing them of being anti-poor and middle-class, and obstructing pro-poor programmes.

The creation of a human chain, Siddaramaiah said aims to strengthen the unity of humanity. Officials over one lakh people each from 10 districts participated in forming the human chain. Dharwad saw 3.6 lakh people taking part, the highest, while Chikkaballapur district had the least number at 11,708 people.

Democracy Day ambassadors Harekala Hajabba, sanitation workers Nagalakshmi and Manjula, transgender activist Priyanka, and two specially-abled students participated.

25 LAKH FORM HUMAN CHAIN

Some 25 lakh people literally joined hands and forged a 2,500km human chain on the occasion of 'International Day of Democracy' across all 31 districts. Officials said the human chain was unbroken and one of the biggest.

School and college students, govt employees, and ordinary people participated in the event. They gathered at taluk centres, district headquarters, and all towns around 9.30am. Chief minister Siddaramaiah inaugurated the programme at Vidhana Soudha. Siddaramaiah read out the preamble of the Constitution, and all participants

repeated it. This was replicated at all districts.

Some 60,000 people participated in Bengaluru city forming a 53km chain spanning Bhattarhalli on Old Madras Road, through Bengaluru Rural, CBD and Doddahalli in Ramanagara district.

Vidhana Soudha was the epicentre of democratic fervour. One of the highlights was the 'Print Your Preamble' stall set up by #ReclaimConstitution. The initiative drew thousands who hand-printed their own copies of the Constitution's Preamble. By the end of the day, 4,800 Preambles had been printed.

MAN BREACHES SECURITY RING

Vidhana Soudha police detained a 30-year-old man for allegedly crossing a police security cordon and trying to put a shawl on CM Siddaramaiah during the event.

Police identified the suspect as Mahadev Naik, a resident of Kanakapura. He earlier worked in a car showroom as a sales executive but has been jobless for the past six months. While HC Ma-

hadevappa, social welfare minister, was addressing the gathering at 10.20am, Naik made his move, but was intercepted by police on the dais.

Police said Naik is a fan of Siddaramaiah and wanted to felicitate him with a shawl. He was booked under various BNS sections for trespass, public nuisance and obstructing public servants from discharging their duties.

Defeat divisive forces to save democracy, country's unity: CM

'They do not want the poor to grow strong economically and socially'

BENGALURU, DHNS

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday gave a clarion call to defeat the divisive forces that are against the poor, Dalits and social justice in the country to 'save democracy and the country's unity'.

After launching the human chain to mark the International Day of Democracy at the Vidhana Soudha here, Siddaramaiah said these forces were enemies of the society.

"Unless they are defeated, the rights of Dalits, backward classes and women cannot be restored. The BJP and other divisive forces are opposed to the poor and middle class. They do not allow implementation of pro-poor programmes," he said. He warned that the divisive forces wanted to uproot democracy and in the name of unity, they want to destroy plurality, besides making the Constitution inactive.

20 lakh people
The CM said that the fact that

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah beats the drum to inaugurate the statewide human chain on the occasion of the 'International Day of Democracy,' at the Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Sunday. Chief secretary Shalini Rajaneesh, ministers K J George, H C Mahadevappa, chairman of the Legislative Council Basavaraj Horatti, Padmashri Harekala Hajabba and others were present. DH PHOTO/S K DINESH

20 lakh people had joined hands to form a human chain was a warning to the destructive forces.

He said the values of equality and democracy existed even during the times of Buddha and Basavanna.

The Anubhava Mantapa of Basavanna was a standing symbol of democracy that existed in Karnataka 12th century onwards.

'Guarantees discredited'
Underlining that his government's guarantee schemes were benefiting all sections of society, he charged that these divisive forces did not want the poor to grow strong econom-

ically and socially. Therefore, they were constantly trying to show pro-poor schemes in a bad light.

Accusing the Opposition BJP of giving credit to the central government for the 'Anna Bhagya' (free rice) scheme, Siddaramaiah questioned why should one pay taxes to the Centre, if it gets credit for the free rice scheme?

"Is this not our people's money? This money is not of PM Modi or Nadda (BJP president J P Nadda)," he said.

'Plurality under threat'
On the BJP's criticism of his government, the CM said, "We are ready to rectify our

mistakes, if any. But forces like BJP are anti-poor, anti-Dalit and against social justice. They want to uproot democracy and in the name of unity, they want to destroy plurality."

Siddaramaiah quoted the speech of Dr B R Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution, in the constituent assembly on November 25, 1949, in which the latter says mere political democracy is not sufficient.

"For it to be successful, there should be economic and social democracy. Until there is discrimination between rich and poor, upper and lower castes, there is no meaning for political democracy," he said.

The CM launched the event by reading the preamble of the Constitution, following which people from various walks of life, including transgenders and differently-abled people, held hands to form the human chain. He then joined the 2,500-km-long human chain, 'a symbol of equality, unity, fraternity and participative governance'.

World's largest?
The government claimed that the human chain, formed from Bidar to Chamarajanagar covering all 31 districts, was the world's longest.

Similar events were held in all districts, in which ministers, public representatives and senior officials took part.