

BJP-ruled states defy Centre, not to withdraw textbooks

The BJP education ministers from various states staged a walk out from the CABE meeting saying it had politicised education.

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Accusing the UPA government of "politicising education", the education ministers of BJP-ruled states walked out of the Central Advisory Board on Education (CABE) meeting on Tuesday. "We are with you if you want to discuss education. But the agenda of this conference is to get our seal of approval to the Common Minimum Programme. It is arbitrary and unconstitutional," Rajasthan Education Minister Ghanshyam Tiwari, who led his colleagues from other BJP-ruled states in the walk-out, said here.

Notes of discord were visible from the beginning of the two-day meeting of the reconstituted body here on Tuesday morning and it reached a flash-point when Human Resource

Development Minister Arjun Singh rose to give his address.

Mr Tiwari, along with Anadi Ben Patel of Gujarat, Ajay Chandrakar of Chhattisgarh, P N Singh of Jharkhand and Alka Jain of Madhya Pradesh, stood up and demanded that the references to the Common Minimum Programme and communalisation be removed from the copy of the minister's speech circulated among the participants.

But he refused to calm down and continued his tirade against the UPA government saying they were using the CABE as a platform for politicisation of education.

"The changes being effected in the history text books are not only violative of the Supreme Court order but are also contrary to the President's views on the subject," he said before staging the walk out.

Mr Tiwari also said BJP governments in the states would not implement the Cen-

tre's decision to withdraw history and social science textbooks published by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

Politically motivated

Describing the boycott and walk out of the education ministers of the BJP-ruled states as "politically motivated", Mr Singh rejected the criticism of being "arbitrary and one-sided" in an important national issue like education.

"It was NDA which, instead of harmonising different schools of thought sought to impose their ideology on others. The earlier governments including the NDA had not called a meeting of CABE for the last ten years," he said.

Stating that his government has already undertaken action on the issue of "de-saffronisation of history textbooks, reversing the trend of communalisation and restoring autonomy of the institutions of

higher learning" he said the UPA government had recognised the existence of different ideologies and wanted to go forward by harmonising them.

Criticising the walk out as "undemocratic" noted author and member of the CABE, Prof U R Ananthmurthy said the ministers should have participated in the meeting and should have tried to sort out the differences through dialogue. Later, taking part in the meeting D Manjunath, Education Minister of Karnataka urged the Centre to frame a comprehensive law for streamlining the admission system in professional colleges and ensure that UGC grants reach the institutions in the state.

He also informed the minister about the Karnataka government's decision to extend the "Akshara Dasoha" (mid-day meal scheme) for high school students and sought Central financial assistance for the scheme.