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Hindi haunts UP schools

FROM ANAND SOONDAS

Lucknow, June 28: While West Bengal has launched a drive to reintroduce English from Class I, the Uttar Pradesh government has sparked a controversy by doing the opposite.

To the shock of thousands of students, the government has initiated a move, called *Krishna Sudama Ek Sath Padhe*, under which there would be a common syllabus and a common medium of instruction in all primary school, including private schools. English is out, Hindi is in.

However, some private schools have questioned the legal validity of the proposal and threatened to move court.

Minister for basic education Baleshwar Tyagi said the move was prompted by the "inherent inequality in our modern learning system". "It is a well-known and proven fact that a child learns best in his mother tongue and Hindi is our mother tongue," he said.

Terming it a historic decision, Tyagi said: "It is time to do away with the current unequal system of education. Why should students of government schools be taught one syllabus, while those in private or government-aided schools taught another? Even the medium of instruction varies."

Tyagi maintained that the government is ready to meet "any eventuality" following the decision, as there was bound to be a wave of protests from "many quarters". He said the move to replace the CBSE and ICSE syllabi with a "common school system"

has been done "primarily to protect the interests of students who belong to the weaker sections of society".

If the government has its way — the Cabinet has to formally ratify the decision, but the education minister says "it will be done" — the Basic Shiksha Parishad will prevail from July 1.

Instead of the seven books prescribed by the CBSE for students of Class I, the Parishad will have only one book, *Bhasha Kiran*. In Class II, the children would study only two books, *Bhasha Kiran* and *Bal Ganit*. In the next class, students will have five books — Sanskrit, *Bal Ganit*, *Bhasha Kiran*, English and *Hamara Parivesh*.

Under the scheme, more than 88,000 primary schools across the state would get the books free, while the rest will have to buy it from the market.

However, a section of the English medium schools and parents has ridiculed the move.

Questioning how students could make the switch overnight, Jagdish Gandhi of City Montessori School, one of the biggest in the city, quoted a recent Madras High Court ruling that the state could not superimpose the medium of instruction on students.

"Everyone in the world is moving ahead with English and we are ignoring it. The government should have sought the opinion of scholars, teachers, parents and students before taking such a drastic decision," he said.

Tyagi, however, remains unfazed by the cries of "unfair tyrant".

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LANGUAGE OF EDUCATION