

Madhya Pradesh Assembly Moves to Curtail Protests, Slogans in Monsoon Session



The Madhya Pradesh Assembly Secretariat has issued a directive prohibiting protests, sloganeering, and the use of symbolic items within the Assembly premises during the upcoming Monsoon Session, scheduled to commence on July 28. This decision, conveyed through a circular dated July 10, aims to ensure orderly proceedings and maintain the dignity of the legislative body, though it has drawn sharp criticism from the Opposition.

The directive, issued under Standing Order 94(2) of the Speaker, bans various forms of dissent previously seen in the Assembly, including the display of masks, horns, and other symbolic items, effectively transforming the premises into a "silence zone" during the session. While the Principal Secretary of the Madhya Pradesh Assembly, A.P. Singh, stated that this is a routine circular for security purposes issued before each session, its timing ahead of a potentially contentious Monsoon Session has amplified concerns.

In past sessions, opposition legislators in Madhya Pradesh have employed diverse and often theatrical methods of protest to highlight issues ranging from unemployment to alleged corruption. These have included wearing black masks, bringing plastic snakes to symbolize government inaction on jobs, and even using skeleton costumes or gold bricks as metaphors for various grievances. This new directive explicitly targets such demonstrations, signaling a stricter approach to maintaining decorum.

The Opposition Congress party has strongly condemned the ban, labeling it an authoritarian move and an attack on democratic rights. Umang Singhar, the Leader of Opposition in the

Assembly, alleged that the decision was made "under pressure from the government" and undermines the ability of elected representatives to voice public concerns. "If people can't see what's happening inside, if slogans of Mahatma Gandhi and Baba Saheb Ambedkar are objectionable now, then are we in a state of emergency?" questioned Hemant Katare, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, emphasizing the constitutional rights of legislators under Article 194.

Conversely, some ruling party members have defended the order, asserting that the Assembly is a forum for serious constitutional discussion, not for "wrestling and chaos." They argue that protests belong in designated public spaces outside the legislative building.

As the Monsoon Session approaches, the enforcement of this new regulation will be closely watched. The debate surrounding the balance between parliamentary decorum and the democratic right to protest highlights an ongoing tension within India's legislative landscape, particularly as state assemblies seek to streamline proceedings while opposition parties aim to make their voices heard effectively.