

RALLY IN TAMIL NADU

Opp creating mistrust over EWS quota, won't affect other quota: PM

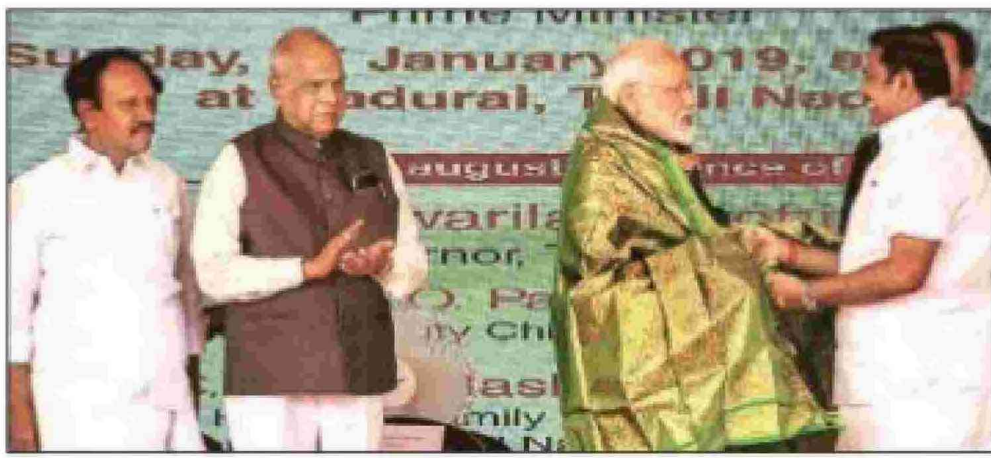
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
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ACCUSING THE Opposition parties of creating an “atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust” for their “selfish interest”, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the 10 per cent quota for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) would not impact the existing reservation benefits for Dalits, tribals and OBCs.

“The 10 per cent reservation in education and government employment for the poor among the general category... This decision was taken in such a way that it does not impact the reservation already availed by Dalits, tribals and OBCs. But it is unfortunate that an atmosphere of suspicion, and mistrust was created by a section of people in Tamil Nadu for their own selfish interest... All of you should be vigilant about such negativity. Any political thought that opposes the poor cannot benefit anyone,” Modi said while addressing a rally in Madurai.

The DMK and some other parties in the state have opposed the 10 per cent quota, saying social backwardness alone should be the criterion for reservation. The DMK has moved the Madras High Court challenging the Constitution amendment on EWS quota.

Taking a swipe at the proposed grand alliance of Opposition parties, Modi said the Centre’s efforts against corruption had created a “stir from



PM Narendra Modi with (from left) Lok Sabha Deputy Speaker M Thambidurai, TN Governor Banwarilal Purohit, Chief Minister E K Palaniswami in Madurai on Sunday. PTI

THE EDITORIAL PAGE



WHOSE QUOTA IS IT ANYWAY?

BY AMITABH KUNDU
PAGE 12

Chennai to Delhi”, and all those who were “used to making bills in government contracts... welfare schemes, are now facing the music.” That was why they were all coming together, he said.

“They say that keeping aside all other considerations they must unite to remove this watchman. However big a group

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

RELATED REPORT

PAGE 8

EXPLAINED

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Bid to tackle reservations over EWS quota

TWEAKING THE quota system is tricky terrain, given how the eligible sections (SCs, STs, OBCs) have guarded it against any dilution. The introduction of 10 per cent EWS quota for the general category has the potential to create anxiety over whether it will affect the existing reservation benefits. So, ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, the government has been using every opportunity to allay such fears.

Opp creating mistrust over EWS quota: PM

they form, out of fear and negativity, Narendra Modi will stand firmly with the poor,” he said. “And I call upon the people of Madurai and the youth of Tamil Nadu to reject these forces of negativity,” he said.

“Any person who has cheated or looted the country shall be brought to justice. This is regardless of whether he is in India or abroad,” Modi said, in an apparent reference to economic offenders Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi.

Earlier in the day, Modi laid the foundation stone for the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) at Thoppur. Speaking at the event, he said

his government was committed to improving healthcare and upgrading medical colleges across India. He said the number of undergraduate medical seats had been increased by almost 30 per cent in the last four-and-a-half years.

Modi said 1.5 lakh health and wellness centres were being set up to provide comprehensive primary care and preventive health services. Speaking on the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, he said: “It is the largest health insurance scheme in the world. I am happy to learn that 1.57 crore people in Tamil Nadu are covered under the scheme. In

just over three months, around 89,000 beneficiaries were admitted and an amount of Rs 200 crore has been authorised for the admitted patients in Tamil Nadu,” he said.

Besides direct intervention in health care, the Centre was also focused on preventive health care and the Swachh Bharat initiative has become a people’s movement with marked improvement in rural sanitation facilities – from 38 per cent in 2014 to 98 per cent in 2019, he said. “We built nine crore toilets, and 47 lakh of them were in Tamil Nadu,” he said.

“We are working to improve ease of living for the poor

and middle class. Our aim is to ensure that the fruits of development reach all sections.” he said.

Modi also listed other infrastructure projects his government has commissioned in the state, including a project to reconstruct the rail track connecting Pamban and Rameswaram with Dhanushkodi. He said the Railways will soon launch ultra-modern Tejas trains connecting Chennai and Madurai.

Governor Banwarilal Purohit, Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O Paneerselvam were among those present at the event.