

# Amid SC/ST Act row, BJP reaches out to upper castes

**Mohua.Chatterjee**  
@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** Ahead of year-end elections in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan and next year's mega electoral contest, it is a tightrope walk for BJP over the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, with perceived anger among a sizeable chunk of the upper castes and OBCs over the Modi government upturning the Supreme Court order which had diluted some stringent provisions of the law.

The saffron party is now busy placating these caste groups, saying it will ensure that they don't face harassment due to any "misuse" of the SC/ST Act. In states like Madhya Pradesh, upper castes and OBCs have not shied away from pro-

testing against the Modi government restoring the provisions, some thing which has come as a cause of worry for BJP in the poll season.

While Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday assured that he will ensure that the Act is not "misused" and no one is arrested before an investigation, BJP has started its groundwork in Uttar Pradesh to send out the same message to the upper castes and OBCs to guard against any backlash from its core constituency in the Lok Sabha polls, UP law minister Brajesh Pathak told the media on Friday.

BJP has been reaching out to the upper castes and OBCs across the state down to the block level, Pathak said when asked about the si-

tuation on the ground. The party has been holding separate meetings with halwais, Yadavs, Jats, Chaurasias, Rajbhars, Kurmis etc. "We have been telling them that BJP is for all communities (sarv samaj) and we represent all of you and that the party will ensure that the law is 'not misused' against you," said Pathak.

The party has also warned these communities against "fake cases being peddled on social media" and avoid propaganda by mischievous elements, he said.

BJP's move, including Chouhan's announcement to appease the upper castes, though is seen as fraught with the danger of antagonising Dalits who have been protesting against rising incidents of atrocities and harassment in recent times.