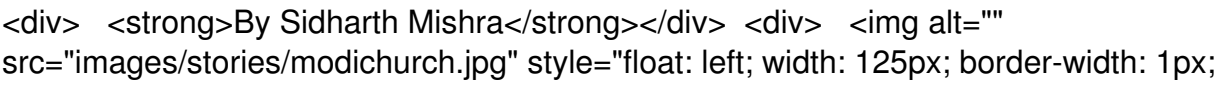


Why on Shivratri Modi went for Church function

Written by Administrator

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By Sidharth Mishra



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, getting wiser from the party's huge loss in the just concluded Delhi assembly polls, on Tuesday said his government will not allow any religious group to incite hatred and will strongly act against any religious violence.

With the Budget session of Parliament scheduled to commence later this month, the Prime Minister's aggressive criticism of hatred against minority communities is also being seen as holding out an olive branch to the Opposition, which had ensured extended logjam in the House during the last session following the diatribe by some of ruling party MPs against minorities.

The united Opposition during the last session had forced the government to take recourse to the ordinance route making laws through emergency instruments provided in Constitution. With the President having frowned upon frequent issue of ordinances and the government needing to go back to the House to seek its approval, the Prime Minister's attendance at a Church function on Mahashivratri Day is understandable.

The Prime Minister was accompanied by Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and Minorities Affairs minister Najma Heptullah and shared dais with Christian community leaders Cardinal George Alencherry, Archbishop Andrews Thazhath, Archbishop Kuriakose Bharanikulangara and Archbishop Anil Couto.

Expressing concern over the increasing division and hostility on religious lines, the Prime Minister said his government will ensure that there is complete freedom of faith. Modi said the freedom to have, to retain, and to adopt, a religion or belief, is a personal choice of a citizen. He was speaking at the function to celebrate Elevation to Sainthood of Catholic priests Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Mother Euphrasia.

The Prime Minister's address assumes importance as visiting US president Barack Obama last month at his Town Hall event at Siri Fort had cautioned against sectarianism. Obama in his address had said, "Every person has the right to practice his faith without any persecution, fear or discrimination. India will succeed so long it is not splintered on religious lines." Modi on Tuesday seemed to echo Obama's lines when he said, "My government will not allow any religious group belonging to the majority or minority to incite hatred against any group." With reference to recent religious violence especially spate of vandalism in churches in the national Capital, the Prime Minister said his government will give equal respect to all religions. "My government will not allow any religious group, belonging to the majority or the minority, to incite hatred against others, overtly or covertly. Mine will be a government that gives equal respect to all religions," he said.

In what looked to be a stern warning to fringe elements within his own party, he said, "We cannot accept violence against any religion on any pretext and I strongly condemn such violence. My government will act strongly in this regard." This is a departure from the winter session of Parliament, wherein he had refused to acknowledge their misdemeanours.

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