

Adivasi-Dalit groups in Kerala call for statewide hartal on August 21; Wayanad exempted

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<https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/hartal-tomorrow-in-kerala-organised-by-adivasi-dalit-group-part-of-bharat-bandh-1.9828878>

Thiruvananthapuram: In response to the recent Supreme Court verdict allowing the sub-categorisation of reservations for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), various Adivasi-Dalit organisations in Kerala have called for a state-wide hartal on August 21, 2024. This move is part of the larger Bharat Bandh organised by the Reservation Bachao Sangharsh Samiti, a nationwide protest against the controversial ruling.

The Supreme Court verdict and its impact

The Supreme Court's ruling, delivered by a seven-judge bench led by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, has triggered widespread unrest among SC/ST communities. The court ruled in favour of allowing state governments to sub-classify communities within the SC/ST list based on empirical data. The primary objective of this decision, as stated by the court, is to ensure that "those who really need it should get priority in reservation".

However, the ruling has been met with strong opposition, with many arguing that it could dilute the benefits intended for SC/ST communities as a whole.

In a separate but concurring judgment, Justice B R Gavai emphasised the need for states to identify the "creamy layer" within SC/ST communities and deny them the benefits of reservation. This aspect of the ruling has sparked controversy, particularly in Kerala, where the idea of a "creamy layer" within SC/ST categories is seen as an attempt to divide the community.

Kerala's Adivasi-Dalit response

The call for a statewide hartal in Kerala has been supported by a broad coalition of Adivasi-Dalit organisations. In a joint statement, leaders from these groups alleged that the Supreme Court's verdict aims to divide the SC/ST list on a caste basis and introduce a 'creamy layer' within the categories, a move they vehemently oppose. They have demanded that Parliament pass legislation to overturn the ruling and protect the integrity of the reservation system.

Despite assurances from the BJP-led central government that the creamy layer concept will not be implemented within SC/ST reservations, the protesters remain unconvinced. They accuse the government of failing to acknowledge that the division of the list based on the creamy layer is at the core of the sub-categorisation plan.

In light of the recent natural disasters that have struck Wayanad, the hartal will exempt that

district.

(With inputs from PTI)