

Saffron Attack on Lakshadweep - Administrator Praful Patel Should be Removed

Lakshadweep Administrator Praful Patel's undemocratic and anti-people decisions have created unrest in the Islands. Actress Ayesha Sulthana has been charged with sedition for opposing Patel's policies and for defending the freedom and liberties of the people of Lakshadweep. Many others have been lathi-charged and arrested. People across the country are protesting against these actions. Moreover, all the BJP leaders on the Island have resigned.

Lakshadweep is one of the Indian Islands off the coast of Arabia. It is a group of 36 small Islands, of which ten are inhabited. According to the 2011 census, the population is 64,473. 94.8 per cent are scheduled tribes, all of whom are Muslims. Malayalam is the most widely spoken language. Literacy rate is 92%. Fishing and coconut farming are the main occupations. Lakshadweep has a district status, a parliamentary seat and ten islands have ten Gram Panchayats. Now Patel has set fire to the peaceful islands with his brute policies.

If you look at the political life of Praful Patel, once a civil contractor was elected as a MLA (2007) during Modi tenure as Chief Minister of Gujarat. In the Sohrabuddin encounter case (2010), when the then State Home Minister Amith Shah was arrested, he was replaced by Praful Patel as Home Minister. The NDA government, of which Narendra Modi later became the Prime Minister, appointed Patel as administrator of the Dadra-Nagar Haveli and Daman Islands in 2016, setting aside the tradition of appointing IAS officers to the Union Territories. During the 2019 Loksabha elections, Patel clashed with Dadra-Nagar Haveli Collector and Returning Officer Kannan Gopinathan, eventually leading to the resignation of an IAS Officer. Mohan Delkar, who has been elected to the Lok Sabha 7 times from the same Union Territories, committed suicide by Patel's alleged harassment. The Central Government merged the Dadra-Nagar Haveli and Daman Islands in January last year and took over their administrative powers.

Patel, who has a history of controversy, has been following fascist methods, making anti-people decisions to provoke unrest and intolerance in the islands since he came to power. One of the laws he made was the

Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation Act, 2021. Accordingly, in the name of development the government has the right to take possession of any land. Gates were opened in the islands to environment destruction by mining, industries, building constructions, national highways, ring roads leading to airports. In India, lands are seized in the name of SEZ's and those who have lost their lands are given jobs only as "security guards". Authorities are ruthlessly removing huts, sheds, nets and boats set up by fisherman on the coast in the name of the Coastal Regulation Zone Coast Guard Act. The Animal Welfare Control Act prohibits the purchase and sale of beef and beef products, where beef is the staple food. The ban on liquor sales on the islands has been lifted in the name of tourism development. Permission was granted to Ambani and Adani companies to build hotels and resorts in the name of developing tourism.

Also, within a few days of coming to power, 200 contract teachers working in high schools were removed. Some Anganwadis were evicted. Students campaigned against these actions on a massive SMS campaign and propaganda in social media. Concerned students were convicted and lathi-charged and illegally arrested. 190 employees working in the tourism department were removed. The local language Malayalam speaking sub-divisional magistrates and other officers were removed from their posts and Hindi- speaking officers from Gujarat were appointed. Patel has taken many anti-people measures, like reducing the powers of the gram panchayats, exercising control over them, closing down the local government run dairy farms and allowing the Gujarat Amul company, imposing rules on contesting candidates in the election. People who protest and oppose these actions are being arrested under "Prevention of Anti-Social Activities" "Goondas Act" designed to arrest anyone without giving a reason and put them in jail up to a year.

With the intervention of the administrator in the language, culture, livelihood and finally in the food consumed according to the customs of the people of Lakshadweep, the people there had no choice but to agitate. People are protesting against dictatorship of Praful Patel for the last few days with the slogan of "Save Lakshadweep". The people of the small islands far from Indian Territory are fighting against oppression. As people and students of the Indian subcontinent, we need to show our solidarity to the struggle of the people of Lakshadweep. We should demand, the Prime Minister of India to immediately solve the problems of the people in the

Lakshadweep islands and to remove Praful Patel, who was implementing anti-democratic, tyrannical policies.

-All India Students and Youth