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Gujarat priest sounds a wake-up call for Goans

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Says Modi as PM will curb freedom of religion

TEAM HERALD

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MARGAO: Exhorting Goans to awake before it is too late, Ahmedabad-based Jesuit priest, Fr Cedric Prakash on Wednesday said that Narendra Modi would bring the entire country under the draconian anti-conversion law, curbing freedom of religion guaranteed under the Indian Constitution if he becomes the Prime Minister.

“In 2003, Narendra Modi passed the draconian anti-conversion law. The law mandates any person to seek permission of the district Collector to change one’s religion. The law has put innumerable hurdles, curbing their right to religious freedom. If Modi becomes the Prime Minister, he would bring the entire country under the draconian law,” Fr Cedric said, while addressing a meeting organised by the Catholic Association of Goa at the Grace Church hall, Margao.

He termed as a big lie the Gujarat Government’s claim on development saying the social indicators points towards dismal performance.

Fr Cedric Prakash sj, who is the director of Prashant, the Ahmedabad-based Jesuit Centre for Human Rights, Justice and Peace, said the divisive force talk about the Hindu state and Hindu nation when the people of India through the Indian Constitution has opted for secular state, wherein every single religion is accepted and respected as per the Constitution. He appealed to Goans not to be fooled or carried out by the ideology of those who rule Gujarat, while recalling how beef traders in Goa were forced to close down their shutters.

He urged the people of Goa to vote with their conscience and vote for what is right. “We have to tackle corruption in the system. We have to stand up for truth and justice,” he said.

Fr Cedric took a dig at the media for creating hype around Modi saying the media has compromised on the principles. “The voice of the media has been throttled and muzzled. People in Gujarat are living in fear. IAS officers are living in fear. The lives of their families have been ruined,” he claimed. “We should not fear anyone and at anytime. Jesus says fear no one. I am not a politician. I don’t subscribe to any politician or the parties. I will go and vote as per my conscience,” he said.

When the media later asked Fr Cedric what message he was giving to Goans when he asked them to be awake before it is too late, he said Goans should join the main stream politics and take active part in what is happening around.

The meeting later adopted resolutions to uphold the secular traditional and maintain the secular nature of the country, that the candidate should ensure that the minority commission is set up in the state and to ensure autonomy for the minority run education institutions.

Anxious moments at meet venue

MARGAO: The presence of the election officials and police at the Grace Church hall gave some anxious moments as their presence was strongly objected by the organisers on grounds the meeting was a private affair.

Members of the Catholic Association of Goa vehemently objected to the presence of the election officials and police when the latter insisted on the video filming of the meeting. The Association maintained that the meeting is a private meeting held in a private hall and was not attended by any candidate contesting the election.

When activist Jose Marie Miranda spoke to Deputy Collector Sangeeta Naik over the telephone, she maintained that there was a complaint that the meeting was being held to intimidate the voters. “I questioned the deputy collector what sort of intimidation was she talking about when the meeting was not a political one when the code of conduct applies to political parties and the candidates,” he said, while asserting that the election officials and the police were curbing the freedom to hold the meeting. It was only after Miranda spoke to the District Collector Mihir Vardhan that the police and election officials left the venue, but not before their presence intimidated the people who wanted to hear the Ahmedabad-based priest, Fr Cedric Prakash.