

Centre sends 213 companies of CPMF for UP by-elections

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Fearing that the state Government would use local forces and state machinery to facilitate rigging in the bypolls, the Union Government has reportedly sent a record number of 213 companies of Central Para-Military Forces (CPMF) to ensure free and fair polling in Lok Sabha and 11 Assembly seats in the state on September 13. Interestingly, in the last parliamentary election, around 400 companies of CPMF were used in the entire state which went to polls in six phases.

However, this time, the Centre has made the security forces available as the prestige of the Bharatiya Janata Party is at stake in the state.

It may be mentioned here that UP's Chief Electoral Officer Umesh Sinha had admitted at a press conference held a few days back that BJP and other political parties barring the Samajwadi Party had demand-

ed central forces to oversee the bypolls.

The Chief Electoral Officer had also made it clear that the Central forces would be deployed only as on earlier occasions. However, he went on to add that the Election Commission was determined to ensure free and fair polls for which it had not only appointed micro level observers at every polling booths but would also record the polling and stream web-cast where internet facility was available.

Additional Director General (Law and Order) Mukul Goel confirmed that about 213 companies of CPMF would be deployed during the by-elections in the state. According to sources in the Election Commission, all the 5,939 polling booths, including 1,929 in Mainpuri Lok Sabha constituency, would be manned by Central forces.

"Each booth will have 4-plus-1 Central forces in each booth," the sources said, adding

that a micro observer would be deployed in each booth with elaborate arrangement for videography of the entire polling process.

Earlier, the Centre had agreed to send 70 companies of the CPMF but later it increased the number on the demands of several political parties, particularly the BJP.

Victory from Mainpuri parliamentary seat is a matter of prestige for SP supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav and he is leaving no stone unturned to see that his grand-nephew is elected from there at any cost.

Meanwhile, BJP state president Laxmikant Bajpai met Chief Electoral Officer Umesh Sinha and demanded free and fair by-elections.

"I have demanded that the by-elections to one Lok Sabha and 11 assembly seats be held in free and fair manner and expressed our apprehensions that the ruling Samajwadi Party could try to rig the bypolls," Bajpai said after meeting the

Chief Electoral Officer.

Bajpai said some district officials were also working as agents of the ruling party SP.

He thanked the Election Commission for sanctioning 213 companies of CPMF for the bypolls in the state and sought deployment of the Central forces at booths.

Polling for Mainpuri Lok Sabha constituency and Saharanpur (Sadar), Bijnor, Thakurdwara, Noida, Nighasan, Lucknow East, Hamirpur, Charkhari, Sirathu, Balha and Rohania will Assembly seats will be held on September 13.

All the assembly seats except Rohania were held by BJP while the Mainpuri Lok Sabha seat was vacated by Samajwadi Party supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav after being elected from both Mainpuri and Azamgarh in the Lok Sabha polls.

Apna Dal MLA Anupriya Patel had vacated the Rohania seat after being elected to Lok Sabha from Mirzapur in alliance with the BJP.