

# Governors should rise above their political affiliations: Ram Naik

by Temp

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**Ram Naik**, the Governor of Uttar Pradesh opens up to an elaborate interview with Zee Media Editor News

Operations, **Vasindra Mishra**. Ram Naik also a former petroleum minister takes direct questions on transfers of governors with the change in government. Vasindra also asks about the reports of forced conversion from the state and about the worsened law and order situation.

**Vasindra:** Hello, today we have Ram Naik, governor of Uttar Pradesh, on our show. We would like to know from him that, how he has maintained distance from controversies even after being in public life so many years? To what extent he is going to exercise his powers in this complex political scenario of Uttar Pradesh? What does he think is the reason behind the rising communal tension in UP?

Ram Naik jee, Few days back RSS chief Mohan Bahgwat had made an appeal to VHP not to disturb harmony between different religious group in Uttar Pradesh. Being a governor what do you think about it ?

**Ram Naik:** I feel that it is our country's tradition and ideology to maintain communal harmony. As a Shloka embedded outside our Parliament, '*ayan nijparovaiti, gan naam laghuchet saam*', that means people with small heart, have the feeling of mine and yours. Another line of the Shloka is, '*udaar charitanaam, tu vasudhaiva kutumbakam*' it means generous people take world as their family. I strongly feel that not only every Indian but all people in the world should think like this. It is everybody's responsibility to maintain peace and harmony in the society. Every organisation, whether political, cultural or social, should feel responsible for

the society. We should not do anything that may harm the social fabric. I strongly feel that whether it is RSS or VHP or any other party, they should work towards the strengthening of society. Before taking oath as Governor, I resigned from my party because in my new role I should not align myself with any party.

**Vasindra:** As a governor one should also take corrective action against the governments and organisations not working according to the Constitution of India. Since few days there have been reports of forced conversion from some parts of Uttar Pradesh. Have you taken any action against it? Have you sought answers on these reports?

**Ram Naik:** See, ever since I came here on July 22, I have been in touch with the Chief Minister. I had conversations with him on almost every big issue. For example, relatives of Mohanlalganj rape and murder case came to meet me and demanded CBI enquiry into the case. They also asked for compensation. I not only conveyed this to the CM but requested him to provide every possible assistance to the victim's family. Now CM has announced Rs 10 lakhs as compensation and has recommended CBI investigation into the case. I also discussed Saharanpur riots issue with him. I feel that this is the role of a Governor, to show the right direction to the government in such provocative incidences. I have always done this and will be doing it.

**Vasindra:** Ram Naik *jee*, your advice has always guided Uttar Pradesh government to tackle situations and to take correct decision in many cases, be it the Mohanlalganj case or the case of Muzaffarnagar. So, now when the issue of religious conversion is rife, a minister of Central government has asked to hand the issue over to CBI. Will you speak to the Chief Minister on this as well?

**Ram Naik:** I will definitely be communicating with him on every important issue. Today, if this issue is that of religion conversion or not is the primary responsibility of state government to find out. The state government has taken the issue and I hope we will find a way out soon.

**Vasindra:** You have been into mainstream politics for long. You have always criticised the election of political faces as Governors, stating that the Governor house should be kept away from politics. Today, the central government has recruited few political faces as Governors. So, what do you think, the way you have resigned from party politics before taking the chair, the other Governors will also follow the same route?

**Ram Naik:** Whatever is written in the Constitution regarding the role of a Governor should be followed. If a person is to be nominated to the post of Governor, and if we keep debating whether he/she is from political background or an officer, then it will be difficult to find a person to appoint. So what matters is, when a person, be it a sportsman, a politician or a governor, if he/she takes oath over the Constitution,

it is their sole responsibility to work as per the Constitution.

I don't think there is anything wrong in appointing a politician as a Governor, the only thing that matters is that a politician should rise above his political affiliation after becoming a Governor. Governor is appointed by the President of the country and this decision is taken by the President keeping in mind the suggestions of central government. Arguing that politicians and bureaucrats cannot be appointed as Governor is lame.

A person who has seen the world, who has seen how the government functions and one who is mature should be given the chair of a Governor. We should understand that change of Governor with the change in central politics is nothing traditional but it's the scenario. As I told the political party in power suggests President for the candidates of Governor. Therefore, thinking that one who is into politics should not be appointed as Governor is practically not a positive attitude. In fact, Governors who belong to a particular party or bureaucrats, should resign from their post with the change of government. Similarly, deputy chairman of the Planning Commission and members of Planning Commission should also resign, this controversy started because they have not resigned.

**Vasindra:** You have given straight forward answer to all my questions, so one more straight question. Political slogans are being coined on the basis of region. These slogans bolster regional politics. What's your take on this, how good is this for the growth of our nation?

**Ram Naik:** Firstly, we should understand the reason for regionalism. In many cases injustice to the people is the main cause of regionalism. So, imparting justice to people may avoid the issues of regionalism. On the other hand, there is always something positive about every region. For instance, I am from Maharashtra, I am Marathi; so the feeling and respect for Chhatrapati Shivaji comes naturally to me and to every Maharashtrian's blood. Similarly the people of West Bengal, those of Uttar Pradesh, should have feeling for their region but again this feeling for one's own region should be kept to a limit.

Another thing is language, our country is rich in terms of varied languages. Even the Indian Constitution has given affiliation to many languages. Our Constitution, has given special rights to some backward regions and if this is followed wisely, I don't think regionalism will take its toll. Every region has its own importance, this importance acts as a catalyst to enhance the feeling of nationalism. People will respect the great Maharana Pratap, people will respect river Ganga, river Krishna and Godavari. On one hand the importance of Ganga and Krishna might be in the area of their origin and flow. On the other hand, these rivers have national importance as well. So the most important thing is better understanding and respect for every region.

**Vasindra:** Uttar Pradesh seems to be among such states which has dozens of universities and academic institutions but still the literacy rate with respect to higher education is not as good as other states. Where do you think does the problem lie, and as a Governor what steps are you taking to improve the present condition?

**Ram Naik:** If we talk about the overall situation, we have better facility and opportunities, but at the same time the quality of education is degrading day by day. It sounds like a paradox, but it is true. As far as UP is concerned, we have 24 universities which are approved by the Government. As per the rule, the Governor is the chancellor of a university and the head of a university is the vice chancellor. I met all vice chancellors in past 6-7 days and have spent half-an-hour with every one of them. I tried to understand their problems related to placements, sanctioning of posts, etc. I also discussed with them about the unresolved issues with the Rajbhavan if any. I asked them to give in writing about unresolved issues related with the government. In this exercise I have come across four major issues, such as pending admission process, delayed results, convocation issue and the quality of education.

I feel that the quality of higher education can be lifted and major changes can be brought about. Personally I'll discuss and take up such issues with the Chief Minister and try to come up with a better solution. I have informed him about all this and we will sit together after August 15 to discuss and will try to find a better solution.

**Vasindra:** It is often said that industrial lobbies have a major say in the appointment of ministers. Those who do not work according to their wishes are forced to resign. How did you manage to complete your tenure as the petroleum minister? Would you like to advice the current petroleum minister as to how he should work in favour of government?

**Ram Naik:** Let me tell you that till 1963, there was only one ministry for chemicals, fertilizers and petroleum. Then it was divided and the Ministry for Petroleum and Natural Resources came up as independent ministry. In almost 5 decades only I could complete the full tenure. I am saying all this because under Vajpayee *jee* we used to fix agendas and then work over it religiously. Now the conditions have changed, we used to import 70% of crude oil but now that has raised to 80%. Still production could not be raised. To meet the requirements, we are paying higher costs. We need to propose a strong policy related to petroleum products and we should execute it. The last ten years have witnessed lack in planning and implementation. We saw four different petroleum ministers during this period. One of them was Mani Shankar Aiyar, who has a fair knowledge of business. Another was Murlidhar Deora, Jaipal Reddy and Veerappa Moily. It happened because we lacked policy. I feel that production of crude oil and natural gas should be increased within the country. If we work honestly, nobody can force us to do

anything wrong. I have never faced any such situation. Can I tell you a story?

**Vasindra:** Yes sure....

**Ram Naik:** We had extracted ethanol from molasses, which can be mixed into petrol. In Brazil, it is a practice to mix 25-to-30% of ethanol in petrol. We should also do it in our country. In the first year of my tenure, we mixed 5% and two years later we began mixing 10% and this proved beneficial for farmers and sugar factories as well. This experiment helped us to decrease our imports. Within 15 days of this decision, many came to express their discontent (over the decision), saying this will negatively affect their business but I refused to change it as it was in favour of farmers.

**Vasindra:** Ram Naik *jee*, the most important trait in a person is honesty. You have always worked with honesty. As you said, Murli Deora had the practical knowledge, in spite of that four ministers were changed in last decade. Another thing, we have plenty of gas resources in our country, even then the price of gas and petrol is sky-high. So, in the present scenario, what do you think will the present government be able to act against those whose responsibility is to fully utilise resources and make it easily available for the people?

**Ram Naik:** I think people invested their faith on the present government because of these issues. As far this is concerned, Modi *jee* has decided to increase the production of ethanol which is obviously a positive step. If this is how the government will work, then there is going to be growth in every sector. Petroleum sector needs the most, because the hiked price of fuel and gas will have hidden impact on the pocket of common man. So for the common man, there should be a policy and I think a practical consideration on these policies will give a positive result. The Modi government is capable and I have had conversations with the newly-elected minister. I am sure he is going to do good work.

**Vasindra:** Thank you very much.

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(The views expressed by the author are personal)

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