

Topic: BANISTAN

The contagion of meat bans gripping **state after state** is producing a fog of mendacious arguments. It has to be stated clearly and in plain terms: These bans violate fundamental liberties, erode the secular character of the state, harm the causes of vegetarianism and non-violence they are ostensibly designed to encourage, and display deep disrespect for religion.

The ban was introduced in **1994 by the then Congress government**. In 2004, the **two-day ban** was extended to **four** days but it had never really been implemented until a recent order.

The ban imposed in some States on the sale of meat during the **Jain community's annual fasting period of Paryushan** is problematic for more than one reason, and militates against the food preferences of a majority of the people in the States concerned. Not surprisingly, the order of the Mumbai Municipal Corporation requiring slaughter houses and meat shops to remain closed for **four days** during the fasting period led to public outrage, and the Bharatiya Janata Party came under attack from the **Shiv Sena**, its own ally in Maharashtra, over the decision. When more States began announcing similar bans, the issue became contentious and took on a communal colour. Indeed, the Shiv Sena warned the Jain community that it risked being alienated from mainstream Indian society if it continued to insist on a ban on meat. In **Jammu and Kashmir**, meanwhile, the High Court called for the strict implementation of a **long-forgotten law that prohibits the slaughter of cows, oxen and buffaloes**. This fed into the political unrest in the Muslim-majority State, with separatist leaders calling for a shutdown in protest. That the States ruled by the BJP are the ones seeking to impose the ban on meat is not lost on anyone. After Maharashtra, the States of **Rajasthan, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh and Haryana** followed suit, and now even **Bengaluru** is raising the suspicion that the idea of a ban was meant to further the BJP's political agenda. In Maharashtra, the government had already introduced a ban on beef; the bar on all meat varieties was therefore seen as an extension of the same **Hindutva** agenda. Although such a move is nothing new, the publicity given to the ban this time, and it being extended **from two days to four and eight days**, resulted in much disquiet.

The stated rationale for the prohibition is that it **does not cover fish and eggs** — is to prevent 'slaughter' during the period of fasting. But that did not convince the **Bombay High Court**, which termed the move "**regressive**" and "**absurd**" in a cosmopolitan city like Mumbai.

The decision to ban the consumption of meat for **eight days** was taken by the BJP-led **Mira Bhayander Municipal Corporation (MBMC)** during **Paryushan** when the Jain community practices temporal monasticism. The community believes that violence against all living beings should be curtailed during these days. As a mark of respect, abattoirs remain closed across most of Maharashtra's major cities for a couple of days. The insistence of the MBMC on closure as well as on private consumption of meat for all eight days has raised the eyebrows of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) as well as the Shiv Sena (SS) as the decision is likely to have an impact on a largely meat and poultry eating Marathi population. With elections of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) slated for 2017, the Shiv Sena too has jumped into the fray to ensure that it does not cede its space as the champion of Marathi rights to the MNS.

Topic
Introduction

A **four-day meat ban** imposed in Mumbai was **reduced to just one day** by the city's civic body and finally put on hold by a court amid protests by political parties including the ruling BJP's ally Shiv Sena, and a huge debate online.

SOME IMPORTANT POINTS:

- India is home to **300 million** cattle and is the **world's largest beef exporter** and **fifth-biggest consumer**.
- States where **cow slaughter** is banned: Maharashtra, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Punjab, Odisha, Puducherry, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Delhi, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh.
- Bulls and buffaloes are sold and eaten in most states even where cow slaughter is banned. Karnataka, for example, allows slaughter of bulls and buffaloes **above 12 years**.
- West Bengal permits slaughter of cows, bulls and buffaloes over the age of **14** but requires a **'fit for slaughter'** certificate.
- Daman & Diu and Goa permit slaughter of those cows which are **old or sick**, or for medical purposes.
- Kerala is believed to be **India's most beef-friendly state**. There is no state legislation banning cow slaughter & dishes like 'beef fry' and 'beef chilli' are available at roadside stalls too.
- Despite the bans, India is only **second to Brazil** when it comes to exporting beef, but most of it is buffalo meat.
- **A one-day ban on the sale of meat has been announced in Bengaluru recently.**
- In **Rajasthan**, the ban has been enforced since **2008**, both by the Congress and BJP governments, but this year, it has been extended by one day.
- The BJP government in **Haryana** announced that it is instituting a law that provides for a **10-year prison sentence** for those caught slaughtering cattle.
- In Gujarat's **Ahmadabad**, slaughter of cattle has been banned for a week, like every year.
- **Haryana has enforced it for the first time** but as strong objections were raised, the state government clarified that it was not binding.
- The **Karnataka** government has announced that meat will not be sold in the IT city on Thursday to mark the Ganesh Chaturthi festival. Officials say the ban has been around for five years, and each year, meat is not sold on five or six days including Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary on October 2.

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<http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/get-off-the-ban-wagon-2/>

<http://indianexpress.com/article/explained/mumbai-meat-ban-the-politics-of-food/>

<http://in.reuters.com/article/2015/09/08/meat-ban-jains-mumbai-idINKCN0R81EO20150908>

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/leaving-beef-bans-to-the-states/article7000180.ece>