

# India's top court puts order banning Islamic schools on hold

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Online Desk :

India's top court put on hold a lower court's order that effectively banned Islamic schools in the country's most populous state, lawyers involved in the case said on Friday, giving a breather to thousands of students and teachers in the system. The directive comes days before the country begins voting in a national election where Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are seeking a third term. The top court was responding to a challenge to the March 22 order of the Allahabad High Court which scrapped a 2004 law governing the schools, called madrasas, in Uttar Pradesh state, where one-fifth of the 240 million population is Muslim. Saying the law violated constitutional secularism, the High Court had also directed that pupils at these institutions be moved to conventional schools.

"We are of the view that the issues raised in the petitions merit closer reflection," the Supreme Court said on Friday, news portal Live Law reported. The matter will now be heard in July, and "everything will remain stayed" until then, lawyers said. India's federal election process will conclude in June. Iftikhar Ahmed Javed, head of the board of madrasa education in Uttar Pradesh state, welcomed the court's order, terming it a "big win". "We were really worried regarding the future of about 16 lakh (1.6 million) students and now this order has come as a big relief for all of us," he said. In the ten years of Modi's tenure, members of his BJP and its affiliates have repeatedly been accused of anti-Islamic hate speech and vigilantism. Modi, however, has denied that discrimination against minorities exists under his government, which he says is working for the betterment of all.