Statutory status for BCs panel

The Lok Sabha on Thursday unanimously passed the 123rd Constitutional Amendment Bill providing for a National Commission for Backward Classes as a constitutional body, with all 406 votes being cast in support of the Bill.

However, as the House passed an alternative amendment to one proposed by the Rajya Sabha, the Bill will once again go to the Rajya Sabha.

A constitutional amendment under Article 368 needs to be passed by both Houses separately with a special majority.

The Bill as passed by the Lower House inserts Article 338 B in the Constitution, which provides for a Commission for the socially and educationally backward classes with a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and three other members, all of whom shall be appointed by the President of India.

In response to BJD's Bhartruhari Mahtab moving an amendment that there must be at least one woman on the Commission, Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Thaawarchand Gehlot said this would be done while drafting the Rules.

While supporting the Bill, the Congress on Thursday demanded that the caste census data, obtained during the United Progressive Alliance regime, be made public.

(*With inputs from*

Sandeep Phukan)

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