

Centre plans ordinance on SC/ST Act

The government is planning to issue an ordinance to overturn the Supreme Court's verdict that bars immediate arrest of individuals accused of discriminating against Dalits under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and introduce a Bill to insulate the Act from further judicial scrutiny.

The government may introduce the Bill in the monsoon session of Parliament to incorporate the legislation in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution. Any law under it cannot be challenged in court.

"While the Bill is a permanent arrangement to ensure that the provisions of the Act are not diluted again, the ordinance is an interim arrangement to overturn the ruling," a senior government official said. The ordinance will make it clear that the provisions of the Act shall remain valid, despite any judgment or any other law.

"Once promulgated, the ordinance will overturn the ruling," an official of the Law Ministry said.

"The next hearing is scheduled for May 16, and much will depend on it," said an official of the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry. An official said: "Once included in the Ninth Schedule, the legislation gets protection under Article 31-B (validation of certain Acts and Regulations) and is not subject to judicial scrutiny."

END

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