

More seats proposed for Sikkim Assembly

Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Kumar Chamling wrote to the Centre that the State is governed under special constitutional provision Article 371 (F), which distinguishes it from other States and Article 170 of the Constitution (under which the Delimitation Commission came into force) does not apply to it.

The Law Ministry also said that the final order made by the Delimitation Commission could not have been challenged by any court but the special constitutional provision to Sikkim allows them to make the changes. Mr. Chamling also said, "The existing specific reservation of 12 seats for Bhutia and Lepcha communities, and one seat for Sangha constituency, which are given to them on the basis of being ST should not be disturbed or tinkered with."

A resolution passed by the Sikkim Assembly in 2009 had generated apprehension in the minds of the indigenous Bhutia-Lepchas and the expansion of the Assembly could dilute their political rights until there was a "proportionate increase" of seats.

As a way out, Mr. Chamling suggested that the entire Assembly be designated as "Scheduled Tribes." The Ministry of Tribal Affairs opposed the move as the remaining communities like Thami, Chhetri, Sanyasi, Newar, Kirt Khambu Rai, Kirat Dewan, Sunuwar, Gurung, Mangar and Bhujel did not fulfil the criteria.

"There will be amendments to the Second Schedule of the RP Act, 1950, whereby total seats in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly will be 40 in place of the existing 32, reserving five seats for Limboo and Tamang, while retaining the existing reservation for Bhutias, Lepchas, Scheduled Castes and Sanghas," a proposal of the Home Ministry said.

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