

QUOTA FOR MARATHAS APPROVED

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Long-drawn protest: A file photo of Marathas taking out a silent march demanding reservation in jobs and educational institutions. Vijay Bate

The Maharashtra Cabinet on Sunday cleared the decision to extend reservation to the Maratha community by creating a new category called Socially and Educationally Backward Class (SEBC) on the recommendations of the State Backward Class Commission.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced the decision at a press conference held on the eve of the winter session of the State legislature.

The reservation quantum will be fixed by the Cabinet sub-committee assigned to chalk out the technical aspects of the law that will be presented in the next two weeks.

"The report of the Backward Class Commission made three recommendations," Mr. Fadnavis said.

Panel recommendations

The recommendations are Marathas are socially and educationally backward class of citizens with miniscule representation in the government and semi-government services; socially and educationally backward class can be extended benefits of reservation under Articles 15(4) and 16(4) of the Constitution and in view of such extraordinary and exceptional condition, the State government is liable to take action.

Asked if the proposed reservation for Marathas will cross the 50% mark set by the Supreme Court, Mr. Fadnavis said the BC Commission had specifically mentioned that the condition of Marathas was extraordinary and exceptional.

"Even the Supreme Court has said this earlier. Also, even though the case of Tamil Nadu crossing 50% reservation is pending in the Supreme Court, it has not been struck down either. We are confident of extending reservation to Marathas," he said.

Central nod

He said the opinion of the Advocate-General was taken on whether the permission of the Central government and the Centre's various bodies was needed to bring out the legislation in the State.

"We do not need permission from the Centre," he said.

The report did not recommend including or merging Maratha reservation with that of the OBCs.

Asked about the demand of the Dhangars, Mr. Fadnavis said the State government had received a report from the TISS.

"The Dhangars are presently under the VJNT category with 3.5% reservation. Their demand is that they should be added in the Scheduled Tribe category, which comes under the Centre's purview. We will make the recommendation to the Centre," he added.

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