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Cabinet forms panel to decide on SC/ST reservation hike

It will examine Justice Nagmohan Das panel report

BENGALURU, DHNS

Treading carefully, the Cabinet on Wednesday decided to constitute a sub-committee to examine how reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes can be increased in the state.

The SCs want their quota increased from 15% to 17% whereas STs have asked for a

jump from 3% to 7%. The Cabinet authorized Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa to constitute the sub-committee.

"The SC/ST reservation quota was fixed many years ago. Now, with the population having gone up, there is pressure to revise it. The Cabinet sub-committee will go into details such as which categories should get how much enhance-

ment in reservation," Law Minister J C Madhuswamy said, briefing reporters.

"The sub-committee will give its recommendations to the government soon."

The sub-committee is expected to take stock of the report submitted by the Justice Nagmohan Das Commission that was set up by the previous Congress-JD(S) coalition. The Commission, which submitted a 277-page report in July, is said to have favoured the hike in quota.

Social Welfare Minister B Sriramulu, who belongs to the Valmiki (ST) community and is batting for a quota hike, said the government had already

reviewed the pros and cons of the Commission report.

According to sources, the Commission, which received about 850 written representations from the public on hiking the quota, took note of the fact that despite existing reservation, a significant section of these communities do not have access to even primary education.

The report also deals with issues pertaining to internal reservation, creamy layer, reservation in promotion and quota in private sector.

The increase in reservation has been a political hot potato for successive governments. During the Congress-JD(S) co-

alition regime, some Congress leaders feared that the SC/ST communities were deserting them and pushed for a hike in quota.

If the government were to increase the reservation now it would exceed the ceiling of 50% reservation set by the Supreme Court. However, such a move will not be unprecedented as states like Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have already exceeded the cap.

At present, Karnataka provides 15% reservation for SCs, 3% for STs and 32% for the other backward classes (OBCs) adding up to 50%. This covers 101 scheduled castes, 50 scheduled tribes and 207 OBCs.