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ಇಲಾಖೆ / ವಿಷಯ : DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT: _____

ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: The Hindu

ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE : 29-10-20

Seer ends fast after assurance from CM on Panchamsali reservation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BELAGAVI

Basava Jaya Mrutyunjya Swami, seer of the Panchamsali Peetha mutt, ended his fast seeking inclusion of Panchamsali community under 2A reservation category following an announcement by Deputy Chief Minister Laxman Savadi that Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa had agreed to "consider the demand favourably".

Mr. Savadi met the seer, who was holding his dharna in front of the Suvarna Soudha, and told him that the CM had assured him of a positive decision, if he brought all the MLAs from the community to Bengaluru. Mr. Savadi even facilitated a telephonic conversation between the Chief Minister and the seer.

Earlier in the day, the seer told journalists that the Panchamsali community, the largest sub-caste of Lingayats in terms of numbers, had been deprived socially and economically. It was presently in the 3B category of Other Backward Classes. This category covers 85 caste groups with only 5% reserva-



Basava Jaya Mrutyunjya Swami, seer of the Panchamsali Peetha mutt, at the Suvarna Soudha in Belagavi on Wednesday. ■ P.K. BADIGER

tion. "We want to be shifted to 2A that has fewer caste groups, but has 15% reservation. This means that the chances of our youth getting education and employment benefits will increase three times."

He defended his demand by saying that Panchamsalis were as backward as the other caste groups in 2A category. Over 90% of the community members are either

farmers or farm labourers. "They have suffered losses since the 90s when agriculture became less remunerative. They have not been able to send their children to good schools or colleges," he claimed.

He said he would appeal to Mr. Yediyurappa to recall the support given to him by the community since his initial days in politics. "We have been making this de-

mand to every government till now, but it was not accepted," he said, adding that they were hopeful since the Chief Minister was a Lingayat.

He said that the demand for a separate Lingayat religion was not in contravention of the demand for reservation for Lingayat sub-sects. "They are two different things and the demands are made before two different platforms. While the Central government has to grant us the minority tag, it is the State government that has to readjust our reservation categories. I am actively involved in both the agitations."

The seer said a statue of Rani Channamma, who belonged to the Panchamsali community, should be erected in front of the Suvarna Soudha.

District in-charge Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi, Rajya Sabha member Eeranna Kadadi, former Minister Vinayulkarni, and former MLA and district BJP president Sanjay Patil met the seer to express solidarity with him.