

MORE ASSEMBLY SEATS FOR SIKKIM

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Pawan Chamling's tenure ends next year.

The Home Ministry has moved the Union Cabinet to increase the number of seats in the Sikkim Assembly from 32 to 40. The State goes to the polls in 2019.

A senior Ministry official said the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will soon decide on the proposal. If approved, it will be the first expansion of the Assembly since Sikkim merged with India in 1975.

The official said the polls would then be held for the expanded Assembly next year.

The seats are being increased to accommodate the Limboo and Tamang communities, notified as Scheduled Tribes in January 2003. Of the eight new seats, five will be reserved for them.

Prem Das Rai, the lone Lok Sabha member from Sikkim, voted against the no-confidence motion moved against the NDA government on July 20. Mr. Rai represents the Sikkim Democratic Front, the ruling party in Sikkim headed by Chief Minister Pawan Chamling.

Plea in SC

A petition was moved in the Supreme Court that Limboos and Tamangs were not adequately represented in the Assembly, and the court on January 4, 2016 directed the Home Ministry to take action.

The representatives of the two communities were in Delhi in July and met Home Minister Rajnath Singh to expedite the process to increase the number of seats. The delegation said the tribal community nursed a sense of deprivation of their political and fundamental rights, ever since they had been declared a Scheduled Tribe in 2003 under Article 342 of the Constitution. There are 90,000 Limboo-Tamangs.

Sikkim has 12 seats reserved for Bhutias-Lepchas. It is not because they are a Scheduled Tribe, but as a sequel to a political agreement in 1973 between the Government of India, the former Chogyal (King) of Sikkim and political parties. By the Delimitation Act, 2002, the number of seats in an Assembly can be readjusted only on the basis of the first census after 2026. The Second Schedule to the Representation of People Act, 1950 and Section 5A of the Representation of People Act, 1951 have been amended to change the Assembly strength.

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