

■ PM Modi says it will empower OBCs across the country

Bill to grant constitutional status to OBC panel passed

AGE CORRESPONDENT
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The Parliament on Monday passed the Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill 2017, seeking constitutional status for the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC). Prime Minister Narendra Modi described it as a "historic moment" and said it will contribute to the empowerment of the OBC communities across India.

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which had attacked the opposition parties, in particular the Congress, after the bill had got stalled in the Upper House last year after opposition members urged the government to

introduce some amendments, said the passage of the bill has proved the Modi government's commitment to bring the OBC on the development path.

The bill was taken up in the Rajya Sabha where several members urged the government to make public the findings of the caste census and implement reservation accordingly.

It was passed by the Lok Sabha on August 2, superseding the amendments earlier carried out by the Rajya Sabha. The Upper House adopted the legislation along with the amendments made by the Lok Sabha, by 156 votes to nil. Over two-third majority of those present voted in favour of the bill, which is a necessity for amend-

SOCIAL JUSTICE

- The bill gives constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes
- The bill will also have female representation, said social justice minister Gehlot

ing the Constitution.

The Rajya Sabha had earlier passed the measure on July 31 last year, along with an amendment and sent it to the Lower House.

Replying to the debate on the bill, social justice and empowerment minister

Thaawarchand Gehlot said it would help the backward classes fight atrocities and ensure quick justice to them. Referring to the suggestions by the opposition parties, he said the NCBC would have female representation.

The minister also assured that it would also not encroach upon the rights of state governments as they would have their own backward class commissions.

He said state governments had their own lists of castes of OBC people, while the Centre had its own. The NCBC would recommend only to the central government regarding inclusion or deletion of a particular caste in the list.