

Parliament passes Bill to provide 10% quota for poor

Rajya Sabha clears proposed law after nine-hour-long heated debate

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Parliament on Wednesday cleared the Constitutional Amendment Bill guaranteeing 10% quota in education and employment to economically weaker sections in the general category, following an approval by the Rajya Sabha.









The Upper House nod came following an over nine-hour-long heated debate, during which the Opposition accused the government of bringing the Bill in haste with an eye on the coming Lok Sabha election.

Walkout by AIADMK

The AIADMK staged a walkout vehemently opposing the move, while some other political parties, including the DMK, the Left and the AAP demanded that the Bill be sent to a Select Committee.

DMK's Kanimozhi, supported by several members, sought a division of vote on her motion for referring the Bill to a Select Committee. However, it was defeated with just 18 votes in favour. Then the CPI and the AAP members walked out in protest.

The Bill was passed with a majority of 165 against seven

Dissenting voices		
	 <p>The first PM Jawaharlal Nehru brought in the first Amendment... he expressly excluded the word "economic"... What data does the government have to justify this 10%?</p> <p>KANIMOZHI, DMK</p>	 <p>The way this Bill is brought must concern every citizen of the country. The attitude of the govt. is to undermine the Constitution, and Parliament</p> <p>D. RAJA, CPI</p>
 <p>There are three hurdles the Bill has to face. First is complete absence of mind. Second is the constitutionality. And then the hurdle of implementation...Has the govt. collected any demographic data on the economically weaker sections?</p> <p>KAPIL SIBAL, Congress</p>		 <p>This govt. brought several Money Bills to bypass the Rajya Sabha. You could have brought even this as a 'Money Bill'</p> <p>RAMGOPAL YADAV, SP</p>
 <p>Is the new poverty line ₹2,100 per day... since the Bill says ₹8 lakh will be the slab. This scheme is to cheat India</p> <p>DEREK O'BRIEN, Trinamool Congress</p>		

votes. It will be now sent for Presidential assent.

The Constitution (124th Amendment) Bill was introduced by Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Thawar Chand Gehlot, who later in his reply said that the existing reservation to the SCs, STs and OBCs would not be touched by the amendment.

Clarifying the Bill's provisions, Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the reservation would be applicable to jobs in both Central

and State governments, adding that the legislation gave powers to States to determine the economic criteria for identification of beneficiaries. He responded to the Opposition's charge of political intent by terming the government move a "slog-over six", with many more to come.

Earlier, during the debate, Congress leader Anand Sharma said provisions under Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution were for the backward and weaker communities. In

the past, attempts were made twice to extend reservation beyond their scope, but the Supreme Court struck them down. The same happened in several States.

Stating that it took the BJP-led government over four years to bring the Bill in the last session, Mr. Sharma questioned the circumstances in which it was taken up – pointing out that the party had lost recent Assembly polls in five States.

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