

Standing Committee Report Summary

The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2014

- The Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (Chairperson: Mr. Ramesh Bais) submitted its report on the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2014 on December 19, 2014. The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on July 16, 2014. It was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment on September 16, 2014.
- The Bill seeks to amend the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. It provides for several modifications including: (i) new categories of offences (such as, garlanding Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes with footwear and preventing them from using common property resources); (ii) setting up of exclusive special courts for trial of offences under the Act; (iii) duties of public servants under the Act; and (iv) rights of victims and witnesses. The Committee endorsed amending the Act, but recommended certain modifications to the Bill.
- **New offences:** The Committee recommended that the following acts may be made punishable offences: (i) registration of false cases under the Act, (ii) acquiring false Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe certificates and claiming reservation benefits in jobs, admissions, etc., and (iii) entering into an inter-caste marriage to procure the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe status so as to acquire land or fight elections.
- With respect to false and malicious complaints filed under the Act, the Committee noted that relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 are insufficient, and a provision addressing this problem should be included within the Act. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 provides for a similar clause.
- **Special Courts for women:** Atrocities against women belong to a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe should be tried by special courts for women with women judges and women public prosecutors preferably belonging to Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe community. The Committee recommended that the Bill provide for special courts for women.

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