

Tribal organisation wants Adivasi code, but opposes use of 'Sarna'

TNN | Nov 2, 2020, 11.44 AM IST

RANCHI: At a time when the JMM-led state government is gearing up to send a proposal to the Centre favouring the adoption of a separate Sarna code in the census, sections of the tribal community in Jharkhand have decided to oppose the move. Chief minister Hemant Soren had only recently said that his government would convene a special session of the assembly to adopt the proposal. The chief minister's announcement was read in political circles as a bid to retain his party's tribal voter bank in the run up to the upcoming bypolls in Bermo and Dumka.

The members of Rashtriya Adivasi Dharma Samanvay Samity (National Tribal Religion Coordination Committee), which represents around 32 tribal communities, held a meeting on the issue presided over by former speaker of Bihar assembly Devendra Champia on Sunday. The chairperson of All India Tribal Development Council and a former state minister, Geetashri Oroan, and the president of Adivasi Jan Parishad, Prem Shahi Munda, also attended the meeting. It was decided in the meeting that the committee will oppose the state government's proposal at the national level. "The Union home ministry has rejected the proposal for Sarna Code once and so even if the state government sends a proposal to that effect now it would immediately be rejected by the Centre," Munda said. He added that since the registrar general for census has already rejected the Sarna Code, pushing for the same proposal is nothing but an eye wash.

Munda said the term, Sarna, is used for describing the place of worship of the Oraon tribe and so there is no logic in using it for all tribal communities. "Sarna is particular to the Oraon tribe only. Mundas call their religious place 'Jaher' and Santhals call it 'Jaherthan'. And no religion is known by its place of worship. For example, Hindu is the name of the community and the religion and their place of worship is a temple. Similarly, Islam is the name of the religion that Muslims follow and its place of worship is a mosque. Then how can all the tribals be identified with the Oraon tribe's place of worship," he added.

He further said, "The tribal population of the entire country stands at 12 crore, which includes more than 700 tribes of different kinds. For instance, the Bheel community of Rajasthan has a population of two crore and it has nothing to do with Sarna. We should instead opt for Adivasi religious code or else most of the other tribal communities will feel left out."

The committee members have adopted a five-fold resolution, as part of which they will hold a national conference of tribal communities in Ranchi on November 8 in which a consensus for a tribal religious code will be drawn.

The committee members will then handover a representation to governor Draupadi Murmu, demanding a tribal religious code. They said the organisation will also stage dharnas in every district from November 5 to 14 and hand over a proposal to chief minister Hemant Soren, asking him to send a proposal to the Centre for adopting a tribal religious code. The committee also decided to hold a massive tribal rally to press for a uniform religious code for the tribals on February 21 next year at Morhabadi ground.