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Union Minister Ramdas Athawale to approach PM for 25 per cent quota for upper castes poor

BHUBANESWAR: Union minister of state for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale today strongly batted for quota to the economically weaker section from general category. Athawale said the reservation limit should be raised to 75 per cent from existing 50 per cent, giving the additional 25 per cent reservation for economically backwards in the general castes.

The Union Minister said he will approach Prime Minister Narendra Modi in this regard and will see if Constitutional amendment can be made for the additional quota.

Noting that reservation can never be abolished, even if some people are opposed to it, Athawale said he has always demanded reservation for economically backward classes from all castes whether they are Jats in Haryana, Patels in Gujarat, Marathas in Maharashtra or the Brahmins. "I have been making this demand for a longtime as I believe this will solve the problem," he told a media conference here.

In order to increase the quantum of reservation beyond the existing quota for SC, ST and OBCs, the Constitution should be amended to avoid any legal hurdle, Athawale said and added that Tamil Nadu has increased the reservation to 69 per cent.

Stating that the Prime Minister is more concerned about the development of the dalits and economically weaker section of the society, Athawale said the NDA government has launched a series of welfare programmes for their development.

Admitting that atrocities against dalit people have increased in almost all the states, president of the Republican Party of India (Athawale) said law alone cannot prevent it. People should work together to bring about social changes by promoting inter-caste marriage.

A determined champion for inter-caste marriages, Athawale said it should be encouraged in a big way and states should also provide attractive incentives to those opting for this. He urged Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to set an example by announcing a reward of Rs 20-25 crore to

districts recording high inter-caste marriages. Youths opting for inter caste marriage should also be promised jobs.

On various welfare measures of the centre for the disadvantaged sections, the Union Minister said that the scholarship being given to SC, ST and OBC students at present was inadequate and the Centre is considering steps to increase the amount substantially.