

Treat Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains as Hindus: Panel

Anil Kumar | TNN

Bangalore: Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs, who until now were categorised as non-Hindus by the Karnataka government, should be treated as Hindus, says a panel recommendation.

The high power committee headed by former governor M Rama Jois set up to suggest reforms in working of temple administration has submitted its final report to CM H D Kumaraswamy in this regard.

The committee was set up in the background of the Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowment Act, 1997, mentioning in its sub-clause that "Hindu does not include a Buddhist, Jain and Sikh." The clause was questioned in the Karnataka HC, which in 2006 quashed stating it was against the Constitution.

Taking note of the court's observation, the committee in its report has said these three religions are integral part of Hinduism and should be treated as Hindus.

Sources said the main purpose of constituting the committee was to set right certain lapses in the Endowments Act, 1997.

"Taking cognizance of the lapses, the high court struck down the entire Act. In the petition filed before the Supreme Court, we prayed that controversial clauses would be rectified in the Act."

The 1,300 odd religious mutts in the state will also come under

revision is only for registration purpose, while the administration solely lies with the mutts' managements. "The government will arbitrate only in cases of financial misappropriation and other major disputes. It will not interfere in the mutts' administration," sources said.

Another major recommendation of the committee is to set up a religious council headed by a retired HC judge for state and at district level for the overall management of religious institutions coming under the Endowments Act.

Other recommendations of the 60-page report include — compulsory registration of all private-run temples, retirement age of archakas to be raised from 65 to 70, reduce the temple management committee from 9 to 5 members and the 5% common pool fund to be utilised only on development of Hindu religious institutions.

When contacted, Dharmadhikari of Dharmasthala Veerendra Heggade declined to comment on the recommendations.

CONFLUENCE OF FAITHS

the purview of the amended Endowments Act if the government accepts the Jois committee report in toto. At present, the Act does not include mutts and denomination temples (community-run temples). Taking a cue from the court's observation that it was discriminatory in nature to exclude mutts, the committee has recommended to include mutts and denomination temples under the Act. Sources clarified that the inclu-