

Second Chamber in States

Why in news?

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Odisha's plan calls for a national policy on the utility of a second chamber in States.

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What is Odisha's proposal?

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- Odisha now wants to join the group of States that have an Upper House.

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- The State Cabinet has approved a 49-member Legislative Council.

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- It has accepted the report of a committee set up in 2015.

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- The committee studied the functioning of the second chamber in other States and made recommendations.

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What is the Parliament's stance?

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- The State Assembly has to pass a resolution for the creation of the Council, by a majority of its total membership.

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- Thereafter, Parliament has to enact a law to create it.

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- Notably, two Bills introduced in the Rajya Sabha in 2013 for establishing Legislative Councils in Assam and Rajasthan are still pending.

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- It apparently indicates the lack of support for such a move.

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- A parliamentary committee that went into these Bills cleared the proposals,

but struck a cautionary note.

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- It wanted a national policy on having an Upper House in State legislatures to be framed by the Union government.

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- This is to ensure that a subsequent government in the State does not abolish it.

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- It also favoured a review of the provision in the law for Councils to have seats for graduates and teachers.

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What are the benefits of a second chamber?

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- The advantages of having a bicameral legislature are well-known.
- An Upper House provides a forum for academicians and intellectuals.
- They are arguably not suited for the nature of electoral politics.
- In essence, it provides a mechanism for a more serious appraisal of legislation.

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What are the concerns?

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- If there was any real benefit, all States in the country should have a second chamber.
- The fact that there are only seven such Councils suggests the lack of any real advantage.
- Also, there is, clearly, the absence of a broad political consensus on the issue.
- **Concerns** - The forum is likely to be used to accommodate party functionaries who fail to get elected.

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- This may defeat the objective of getting intellectuals into the legislature.
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- There is also a question of giving graduates the privilege of being people's representatives in a democracy.
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- Today, legislatures draw their talent both from the grassroots level and the higher echelons of learning.
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- There are enough numbers of doctors, teachers and other professionals in most political parties today.
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- Besides, the second chamber is also an unnecessary drain on the exchequer of the state.
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- It is also a restraining force against the dominance of elected majorities in legislative matters.
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- Given these, Odisha's proposal may give the country an opportunity to evolve a national consensus on Legislative Councils.
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Source: The Hindu

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