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Wanted to scrap SC/ST Act when in Cabinet: Meira Kumar

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New Delhi: Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar on Monday said when she was Union minister in the first UPA government she wanted to scrap the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocity) Act to affirm her belief that there should be a classless and casteless society.

"When I was the Social Justice Minister in the previous UPA government, I wanted to scrap the Prevention of Atrocities against SCs and ST Act as I believe in my father (Babu Jagjivan Ram's) dictum that there should be a classless and casteless society.

"However, ironically, much against my wishes, I had to tell my officers to make the Act more stringent as the society has not been able to transform itself. Laws cannot legislate attitudes. Therefore these laws continue to exist and we need to change our mindsets," said Kumar during a function held to commemorate the 103rd birth anniversary of her late father.

The Speaker said her father often wondered why there was never a renaissance in India, "and I feel that this was because we never ever opened windows of our minds towards change".

Describing class and caste as a hindrance to modern society, Kumar said that in order to have an inclusive society, there is a need to have a "revolution within minds".

"There is a need for a revolution within the minds... Earlier poets and saints tried to change the social mindsets regarding caste and class but they could not succeed... Today in a free India we should try again... There is a need for a revolution within our minds... we need to have an inclusive society as class and caste are a hindrance to modern society," she said.

Earlier, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee, while delivering the Babu Jagjivan Ram Memorial lecture on "Economic Development Beyond Class and Caste", said "India's dream should be to ensure that no person is discriminated upon on the basis of caste and creed."

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