Backward Classes Commission

Why in news?

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The Union cabinet recently decided to replace the existing National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) with a new constitutional body, named the National Commission for the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (NCSEBC).

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How NCSEBC is different from NCBC?

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- NCSEBC will be a constitutional body (like the commissions for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes) rather than a statutory body, like the NCBC.
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- Though this has less practical distinction, it could have important political implications.
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- A modest agenda will limit itself to placing the NCSEBC on par with the National Commission for the Scheduled Castes (NCSC) and the National Commission for the Scheduled Tribes (NCST).
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- This would require amendments to the Constitution, introducing additional Articles comparable to the existing Articles 338 and 338A (which establish the NCSC and NCST respectively), and 341 and 342.
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- These changes shift responsibility for amending the list of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) from the government to Parliament.
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- It also effectively takes away the power that the states currently have to determine their own OBC lists.
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What will be the impact?

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- This does not alter the basic rules of the game, namely the definition of the category “socially and educationally backward classes” and the existing limit of 50% on the total share of various reservation quotas.
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- Now that Parliament would have to decide whether to grant OBC status, it would no longer be possible for opposition parties to stoke agitations without bearing responsibility for the consequences.
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- The burden of handling the inevitable conflicts arising from a zero sum situation could also be shifted from the ruling party to Parliament. A
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- A Zero sum situation arises where the entry of new castes necessarily implies a decline in the share of castes already included.
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Source: The Indian Express

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