Deficit in OBC, SC Positions Vacant at IIMs

Why in news?

Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank's response in Lok Sabha revealed a severe deficit in the number of OBC, SC, ST candidates recruited as faculty in Central institutes of higher education.

What does data on vacant positions show?

- **Institutes** - More than half of the faculty positions reserved for OBCs in central institutions of higher education are vacant.
- About 40% of those reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes also remain unfilled.
- The situation is particularly acute in the elite Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs).
    - More than 60% of SC and OBC reserved positions are vacant.
    - Almost 80% of positions reserved for STs have not been filled.
    - This means that out of 24 positions reserved for STs, only five have been filled.
- For the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), data has only been provided for non-faculty positions.
- To note, both IITs and IIMs have been lobbying for exemption from such faculty quota requirements.
- **Positions** - Within the Central Universities, vacancies are higher at the level of professors.
- Out of 709 assistant professor positions reserved for STs at the 42 universities, more than 500 have been filled.
- However, when it comes to professors, only nine positions have been filled out of the 137 reserved for ST candidates.
- This means 93% of these posts remain unfilled.
- Less than 1% of the 1,062 professors in central universities are from ST communities.
- Similarly, 64% of the 2,206 assistant professor positions reserved for OBCs have been filled in the Central Universities.
- However, less than 5% of the 378 professor positions reserved for OBCs have been filled.

What is the government's response?

- After the implementation of 'The Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Act, 2019', the OBC reservation has been implemented at all levels.
- The Ministry of Education and University Grants Commission (UGC) continuously monitor the vacancies.
- The onus of filling up the teaching posts lies on Central Universities which are autonomous bodies created under Acts of Parliament.
- In fact, in June 2019, UGC had written to all Universities, giving them a six month deadline to fill up their vacancies.
- The government also issued a warning that grants would be withheld if its directions were violated.
- According to the data presented in the Lok Sabha, there are now 6,074 vacant positions at the 42 universities.
- Of this, 75% are in the reserved categories.

What are the recommendations made in this regard?

- In the case of the IITs, an official committee suggested that the way out would be to exempt these institutions from reservation.
- This option is provided for under the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Act, 2019.
- Another suggestion is to dereserve lower faculty positions after a year, if suitable candidates from the beneficiary communities are not found.
- But this cannot be the right course for official policy, as reservations system is widely seen as the shortest path to equality and equity.

What are the possible measures to address this?

- The data only confirm that the trend seen earlier in the IIT system extends to many more institutions.
- What could help bridge the gap is a better understanding of the lacunae in the education system.
- The failure to recruit faculty to all the reserved positions is usually attributed to the absence of enough qualified candidates.
- One of the forward-looking remedial measures suggested by the panel was to start government-sponsored preparatory programmes.
- This would both equip aspiring faculty and create a pool of research talent.
- This has merit in the context of management, science and other disciplines.
- In the short term, it could help qualified individuals overcome the deficiencies of their preparatory years.
- Such courses would also make these institutions of higher learning more socially responsive.
- It would help meet the goal of addressing historical deprivation of

communities based on caste.

Source: The Hindu

