Demand for Caste Census

Why in news?

A 11-party delegation met PM to discuss the possibility of caste being included as a part of 2021 census.

What is caste census?

- Caste census is the procedure of systematically acquiring and recording the caste-wise tabulation of India's population
- The last caste census was taken in 1931 but was stopped by the British with 1941 Census, citing financial constraints
- India publishes separate data on Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), since 1951 but it does not include data on other castes.
- Socio –Economic Caste Census was conducted in 2016 but it was not made public

  SECC 2016 was conducted by Ministry of Rural Development in rural areas and the Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation in urban areas

What is the need for demanding caste census?

- There is no proper estimate for the population of OBCs, various groups within the OBCs, and others.
  - Mandal Commission estimated the OBC population at 52% while political parties make their own estimates
- It will be a pro-poor exercise for better planning and targeting of welfare schemes
- It will help policy makers in rationalising the reservation matrix
- To debate on issues like disproportionate benefits from reservation by particular groups within each category
- Courts have often emphasized states to have adequate data on caste

Why is caste census opposed by some groups?

- Fear that caste census will widen the social rifts among different castes

- Integrity of data is questioned as ruling parties might alter the data according to their political motive
- Some groups argue that caste-based census is against the idea of a casteless society
- Vote bank politics is another major concern

Source: The Hindu

Quick Facts

OBC Commissions

- First Backward Classes Commission - 1955 – under the chairmanship of Kaka Kalelkar
- Second Backward Classes Commission – 1979- under the chairmanship of Mandal
- Justice Rohini Commission – for subcategorisation of OBCs

