National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC)

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Why in news?

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Lok Sabha passed the **123rd amendment** to the Constitution which will, when it becomes law, bring into being a **'constitutional'** National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC).

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What are the shortcomings?

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- Parliament will determine who is a BC for the 'Central' List, not NCBC.
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- New NCBC has **no responsibility to define backwardness,** so it cannot address the current challenge of well-off castes' demands to be included as BCs.
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- **Article 340** deals with the need to identify "socially and educationally backward classes", understand the conditions of their backwardness, and make recommendations to remove the difficulties they face.
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- The 123rd amendment delinks the whole folio of backward classes from Article 340 and brings it closer to provisions related to SC/STs.
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- The main shortcoming of the current NCBC is that it has **no power "to hear the grievances" of the BCs.**
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- Curiously, the SC commission has become the gold standard for those demanding the new NCBC. If the new body is as incompetent as its role model, the nation will be spared of a lot of avoidable problems.
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- The proposed system will treat the developmental issues related to BCs on a

par with caste discrimination and untouchability suffered by SCs and even by STs.
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- The new NCBC will hear grievances, inquire into complaints, summon officials given its **powers as a civil court,** issue directions and have the right to be consulted by both Union and the States on policy matters related to BCs.
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- The whole business of inquiries into complaints, safeguards, recording evidence, etc. will result in the need to enact laws similar to the ones in existence for the protection of SC/STs.
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- One is right to assume that BCs do face discrimination and exclusion and they deserve state support. But there is no justification to suppose that their conditions are as bad as those faced by the SC/STs.
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Source: The Hindu

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