OBC Reservation in All-India Quota Medical Seats

Why in news?

The Union Health Ministry has announced 27% reservation for the OBCs and 10% quota for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in the All-India Quota (AIQ) scheme for UG and PG medical / dental courses from 2021-22 onwards.

What is the All-India Quota scheme?

- The All-India Quota (AIQ) scheme was introduced in 1986 under the directions of the Supreme Court.
- The aim was to provide for domicile-free merit-based opportunities to students from any State to study in a medical college located in another State.
- It comprises 15% of UG seats and 50% of PG seats surrendered by the States for admission through a central pool in government medical colleges.
- Initially, there was no reservation in the AIQ.
- The Supreme Court in 2007 introduced the reservation of 15% for SCs and 7.5% for STs in the scheme.
- Meanwhile, the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act became effective in 2007.
- It provided for uniform 27% reservation to the OBCsin all the Central Educational Institutions.
- However, this reservation was not extended to the AIQ seats of State medical and dental colleges.

How will the new provision benefit?

- The OBC students from across the country shall now be able to take the benefit of the reservation in AIQ to compete for seats in any State.
- Being a Central scheme, the Central List of OBCs shall be used for this purpose.
- The decision would benefit every year nearly 1,500 OBC(Other Backward Classes)students in MBBS and 2,500 such students in postgraduation.
- Among EWS students, around 550 in MBBS and around 1,000 in postgraduation will be benefitted.
- [The reservations will apply for undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) medical / dental courses (MBBS / MD / MS / Diploma / BDS / MDS).]

Why is the move significant?

- As AIQ seats originally belonged to the States, the quota policy applicable to the respective States ought to be applied to them.
- There were OBC seats in medical institutions run by the Centre, as well as State-specific quotas in those run by the States.
- But seats given up by the States to help the Centre redistribute medical education opportunities across the country were kept out of the ambit of reservation.
- The Centre's decision to extend its 27% reservation for OBCs to all seats under the AIQ thus puts an end to this discriminatory policy.
- [In order to balance OBC interests with those of the socially advanced sections, the Centre has also decided to provide 10% of the AIQ seats to EWS candidates.]
- The decisions are almost entirely the outcome of a Madras High Court verdict.
- The Madras HC, in July 2020, held that there was no legal impediment to OBC reservation.
- But the policy varied from State to State, and so it left it to the Centre to decide the modalities for quotas from the current academic year (2021).
- Credits also go to the efforts of the DMK party in Tamil Nadu that approached the court with the demand.

Source: The Hindu

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