Reservation for Marathas

Why in news?

The Bombay High Court (HC) verdict has upheld the Maharashtra government's law on reservation for Marathas.

What isthe law?

- The law had conferred **reservation** benefits in education and public employment on the **Maratha community**.
- It created a group called **Socially and Educationally Backward Class (SEBC).**
- SEBC had included Marathas as the sole group under the category, and extended **16% reservation**.

What were the hurdles?

- The additional Maratha component takes the **reservation up to 68%** (Goes beyond the limit of 50% imposed by the Supreme Court).
- There were doubts whether **one particular caste** group can be a **special class**.
- This law had faced **strident agitations** from the community in the past for reservation benefits.

What is the HCverdict?

- It has ruled that there were "**exceptional circumstances and an extraordinary situation**" to warrant the crossing the 50% limit.
- It has **upheld the government's decision** to accept the Maharashtra Backward Classes Commission's report on the backwardness of the Maratha community.
- It **faulted the government** for exceeding the panel's recommendation for 12-13% reservation and pulled back the figure.

What is the 'extraordinary situation' as per HC?

- The failure to treat this group as backward for decades has pushed it into social and educational backwardness.
- Thus, it says, this is an extraordinary situation wherein the State had to treat

them as a separate category.

Why many aren't convinced by theHC's reasoning?

- It is doubtful whether a **politically influential and dominant community** can be treated as a special category in itself.
- Marathas are the **only member** of the newly created '**SEBC'**.
- It is confusing how can **SEBC be a separate category** outside the OBCs.
- There is **no need for separate reservation** for Marathas.
- The upliftment can be achieved by including them in the **OBC list**itself.
- If there were concerns about too large a population sharing too small a quota, the existing OBC reservation could have been expanded.
- As **mere expansion of the reservation** pool is unlikely to be a constitutionally permissible reason, exception to the 50% limit should be examined by the Supreme Court closely.

Source: The Hindu

