SC upholds constitutional validity of OBC quota

Why in news?

The Supreme Court allowed NEET counselling to proceed, maintaining 27% reservation for OBC and 10% for EWS in All India Quota seats.

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Why was the Pandey Committee constituted?

- While reviewing the petitions the court sought the government's rationale behind the 8 lakh income limit to identify the EWS category.
- The Pandey Committee was constituted for this purpose.
- The panel submitted its report supporting the income limit of Rs 8 lakh gross annual family income as reasonable for identifying EWS.
- It had however suggested certain other modifications in EWS criteria, which could be considered for implementation only from the next academic year.
- The government, referring to the Pandey panel recommendation, urged the court to allow the NEET counselling for 2021-2022 to resume under EWS criteria stipulated in January 2019.

What was the recent Supreme court ruling?

- **On medical admission -** Considering urgency, this year Supreme court allowed for
    - 27% reservation for OBC and 10% EWS in All India Quota seats as per July 2021 government order.
    - Rs 8 lakh gross annual family income limit criterion for identifying EWS.
- **On OBC category -** The court upheld the constitutional validity of 27% reservation for OBC in NEET's All India Quota (AIQ) seats for postgraduate and undergraduate admissions.

- **On EWS category -** The question of the validity of the EWS criteria would be decided upon by the Supreme Court in the third week of March 2022,

- However the court agreed that EWS criteria can be used for the NEET admissions this year so that the entire exercise is not derailed.

- Rs 8 lakh income threshold has to be implemented in this year's NEET counselling.

- Also future and prospective recommendations made by the Pandey Committee, modifying the criteria in the January 2019 memorandum, would be subject to the final adjudication by the Supreme court.

Reference

1. https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/education/sc-allows-neet-counselling-for-2021-22-to-resume-under-existing-ews-criteria/article38166675.ece?homepage=true

