State of Denotified Tribes

Why in news?

A standing committee of Parliament has criticised the functioning of the development programme for de-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes.

Who are denotified, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes?

> *It has been estimated that South Asia has the world's largest nomadic population. In India, roughly 10% of the population is denotified and nomadic.*

- Denotified tribes (DNTs) are communities that were notified as being 'born criminal' during the British regime under a series of laws starting with the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871.
- They were denotified in 1952 when independent India repealed this act but the Habitual Offenders Act, 1952, kicked in soon after.
- Nomadic and semi-nomadic communities are defined as those who move from one place to another rather than living at one place all the time.
- A **National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (NCDNT)** was was first set up in 2003 and later reconstituted in 2005.
- It was headed by Balkrishna Sidram Renke and estimated their population at around 10.74 crore based on Census 2001.
- A new Commission which was constituted in 2014 to prepare a state-wise list submitted its report in 2018 identifying 1,262 communities as de-notified, nomadic and semi-nomadic.

What is the standing committee report about?

- The Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment tabled its 31st report in Parliament.
- The Committee noted that the Department could not spend even a single rupee in 2021-22 on the **Scheme for economic empowerment of DNT communities**.
- The budgetary allocation has been reduced to Rs 28 crore for 2022-23 against the budgetary allocation of Rs 50 crore for 2021-22.
- It also noted that the department has already delayed in formulation of the Scheme for welfare of denotified, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities.
- The Committee has found that the department has not been able to take any decision in placing these communities in SC, ST and BC categories till date.

What is DWBDNC?

- The 2014 commission that submitted report in 2018 had recommended the setting of up a permanent commission for these communities.
- However, the government set up the **Development and Welfare Board for De-notified,**

Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Communities (DWBDNC) under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.

- It was set under the aegis of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for the purpose of implementing welfare programmes.
- The DWBDNC was constituted in 2019 under the chairmanship of Bhiku Ramji Idate.
- Also, a committee has been set up by the NITI Aayog to complete the process of identification of the DNCs.
- Ethnographic studies of DNCs are being conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India.

What is the history of deprivation faced by these communities?

- Many commissions and committees have referred to the problems of these communities. These include
  - Criminal Tribes Inquiry Committee, 1947
  - Ananthasayanam Ayyangar Committee, 1949
  - Kaka Kalelkar Commission, 1953
  - B N Lokur's Advisory Committee, 1965
  - B P Mandal Commission , 1980
  - National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution ((chairmanship of Justice M N Venkatachaliah), 2002
- **Problems faced**
  - Marginalization from social and economic mainstream
  - Low human development index and high relative deprivation index
  - Large deprivation from the gains of planned development
  - Lack of empowerment
  - Carriers of social stigma
- This is partly because these communities are largely politically quiet that they do not place their demands concretely before the government.
- They lack vocal leadership and also lack the patronage of a national leader.

What welfare measures were taken by the government?

- **Dr. Ambedkar Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarship for DNTs-** This centrally sponsored scheme was launched in 2014-15 for the welfare of those DNT students who are not covered under SC, ST or OBC.
- The income ceiling for eligibility is Rs 2 lakh per annum.
- **Nanaji Deshmukh Scheme of construction of hostels-** This centrally sponsored scheme was launched in 2014-15 to provide hostel facilities to those DNT students who are not covered under SC, ST or OBC to enable them to pursue higher education.
- The income ceiling for eligibility is Rs 2 lakh per annum.
- The Central Government provides a maximum of 500 seats per annum throughout the country.
- **Assistance to voluntary organization working for the welfare of OBCs**- From 2017-18, this scheme has been extended for DNTs and EBCs as Central Sector Scheme of Assistance for Skill Development of OBCs/ DNTs/ EBCs.
- **Scheme for Economic Empowerment of DNT Communities (SEED)**- It has four components
  - To provide coaching of good quality for DNT candidates to enable them to appear in competitive examinations
  - To provide health insurance to them

- To facilitate livelihood initiative at community level
- To provide financial assistance for construction of houses

References

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