Sub-categorisation of OBCs

Why in news?

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The government has recently announced the creation of a committee to look into sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBC) quota.

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What is the need?

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- Reservations were intended to be tools of eliminating disadvantages faced by various castes and groups.
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- It has however not paid the desired result of socially and economically empowering the disadvantaged groups.
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- This is because of the huge gap between the large eligible population and the limited number of jobs under the reserved category.
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- Ex: Reservations cover only half the college seats and public-sector jobs.
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- This shortfall in the public policy increases the internal competition within groups.
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- This ultimately deprives the most disadvantaged of the right opportunity to come up in the social ladder.
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What are the challenges in sub-categorising?

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- **Identifying the most disadvantaged** among the current so called eligible for reservation population is a huge challenge.
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- This is primarily because, there is a lack of reliable nationwide data on caste.
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- So far the 1931 colonial Census and some of the ad hoc surveys conducted for specific castes are the sources.
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- The Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) of 2011 also do not give the true picture of socio-economic disadvantages faced by different caste groups.
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- Also, despite various demands, the Office of the Registrar General is reluctant to include caste data in the Census of 2001 and 2011.
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What is the way forward?

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- Government must either increase the availability of government jobs and college seats or reduce the size of the population eligible for these benefits.
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- But, given the 50% cap on reservations and the limited availability of public sector jobs, the viable option is to rationalise on the eligible population.
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- One way of doing this is the introduction of the sub-categorisation of OBC quota which covers a larger group.
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- Besides, steps could be taken for providing the collection of caste data in the ongoing Census 2021 preparations.
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- As disadvantage begins in early childhood, a quality education for all, including the marginalised groups, is a first step in addressing caste-based inequalities.
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- These measures in its wholesome can go a long way in eliminating caste-based disadvantages.
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Source: The Hindu

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