Sub-Categorisation of OBCs

Why in news?

The report of Rohini commission which was set up to examine the sub-categorisation of OBCs was submitted to the President.

What is the need of the commission?

> *According to SECC 2011, total households in the country (rural plus urban) is 24.49 crore. Households considered for deprivation is 10.74 crore.*

- Other Backward Classes (OBCs) get *27% reservation* in central government jobs and admission to educational institutions.
- There are more than 2,600 entries in the Central List of OBCs, but over the years, a perception has taken root that only a few affluent communities among them have benefited from the quota.
- Therefore, there is an argument that a "sub-categorisation" of OBCs (quotas within the 27% quota) is needed in order to ensure *"equitable distribution"* of the benefits of reservation.
- The Parliamentary Committee had said that as on 2016, OBC employees in 78 ministries and departments of the Central government constituted only 21.57% against the quota of 27%.
- Hence, ***Rohini Commission*** was constituted by the Government.

Backward Class Commissions	Chairman
First Backward Class Commission-1955	Kaka Kalelkar
Second Backward Class Commission-1979	Mandal
Sub categorisation of OBCs-2017	Justice Rohini

What about the Rohini Commission?

> *Article 340 provides for the appointment of a Commission to investigate the conditions for the improvement of socially and educationally backward class*

- **About-** Constituted in 2017 under ***Article 340*** of the Constitution
- **Chairman-** Justice G.Rohini, a retired Chief Justice of Delhi High Court.
- **Functions-** To examine the extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation among the castes or communities included in the broad category of OBCs.
- To identify the respective castes or communities or sub-castes in the Central List of

OBCs and classifying them into their respective sub-categories.
- To formulate scientific data on sub-categories and ensuring equitable redistribution of 27% of quota benefits among all sub-communities.
- To recommend corrections of any repetitions, ambiguities, inconsistencies and errors of transcription or spelling.
- After 13 extensions, the committee submitted its report to President and it has not been made public yet.
- **Challenges**
    - *COVID pandemic*- It slowed down the work of the commission, during second wave the government reported that committee is working on finalising the report.
    - *Missing Data*-Absence of data on the population of various communities to compare with their representation in jobs and admissions

Key findings in 2018
• It analysed the data of 1.3 lakh central government jobs under the OBC quota over the preceding five years. • **Findings** - Less than 1% of backward castes have cornered 50% of the reservation benefits in admissions to Central educational institutions and recruitment to Central services between 2014 and 2018. • There are more than 2,600 communities on the OBC Central list but 938 OBC sub-castes have no representation in the reserved seats. • However, this analysis suffered from limitations due to the absence of updated population data.

What is the significance of the report?

- **Recommendation**- It suggested breaking the caste groups into broad categories,
    - With the dominant castes (most access to benefits) getting the smallest share of the 27% reservation, and
    - The historically crowded-out caste groups getting the largest share of the reservation pie.
- **Impetus to caste based survey-** Many State Governments are pushing the Centre for independent caste based survey in their jurisdiction.
    - *Patna High Court* recently upholded the Bihar Government's right to conduct such caste survey.
- **Updation of caste related population-** Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, have conducted exercises to bring OBC reservation in urban local body poll.

What lies ahead?

- **Periodic revision-** There is a need to frequently revise the income limit in determining the creamy layer.
- Inclusion of factors such as the trend of rise in GDP, inflation, per capita income and rise in the cost of living, etc. is needed while revising the income limit.
- **Change income definition-** The definition of income exempts income from salary and agriculture but takes into account income from other sources and this need to be changed.

- **Strong political will-** Political parties should channel their energies to make substantive and qualitative changes in the way the reservation is implemented.
- There is a need to develop an evidence-based policy options that can be tailored to meet specific requirements of specific groups.
- **Institution support-** An institution like the *Equal Opportunities Commission* of the United States or the United Kingdom is in need.
- **Conduct audit**- An audit on performance of employers and educational institutions on non-discrimination and equal opportunity can be undertaken.

Quick facts

Caste Census
• Caste census is the procedure of systematically acquiring and recording the caste-wise tabulation of India's population • The first caste census data was released in 1931. • India publishes separate data on Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), since 1951 but it does not include data on other castes. • The 2011 census even though had caste census but the data was not released. • ***Socio –Economic Caste Census*** was conducted by the Ministry of Rural Development in rural areas and the Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation in urban areas. • It was conducted in 2016 but the report was not made public.

References

1. Indian Express- Rohini panel report
2. PIB-Commission on Subcategorisation of OBCs

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