# UPSC Daily Current Affairs | Prelim Bits 19-03-2020

## Commission for Sub-Categorization of OBCs

- A committee under Justice G Rohini has been set up to examine sub-categorization of Other Backward Classes on 2nd October, 2017 under article 340 of the Constitution to examine the issues of the sub-categorization of Other Backward Classes with the following terms of reference:

1. To examine the extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation among the castes or communities included in the broad category of Other Backward Classes with reference to such classes included in the Central List;
2. To work out the mechanism, criteria, norms and parameters in a scientific approach for sub-categorization within such Other Backward Classes; and
3. To take up the exercise of identifying the respective castes or communities or sub-castes or synonyms in the Central List of Other Backward Classes and classifying them into their respective sub-categories.
4. The sub-categorization of OBCs can ensure increased access to benefits such as reservations in educational institutions and government jobs for less dominant OBCs

- The Commission has not submitted its report to the Government, the Commission expressed the need for obtaining the caste-wise data for which additional time was required.
- Therefore, the tenure of the Commission has been extended by the Government from time to time.
- Union Government has notified the latest extension of the Commission to examine the issues of sub-categorization of Other Backward Classes, by six months, till 31st July, 2020.
- This order aims to study the various Entries in the Central List of OBCs and recommend correction of any repetitions, ambiguities, inconsistencies and errors of spelling or transcription.

## Earlier Commissions on Backward classes

- **The Kalelkar Commission, set up in 1953**, was the first to identify backward classes other than the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes at the national level.
- Its conclusion that caste is an important measure of backwardness was rejected on the ground that it had failed to apply more objective criteria such as income and literacy to determine backwardness.
- **The Mandal Commission report (1980)** estimated the OBC population at 52% and classified 1,257 communities as backward.
- It recommended increasing the existing quotas, which were only for SC/ST, from 22.5% to 49.5% to include the OBCs.
- A decade later, its recommendations were implemented in government jobs, a move that sparked major agitations.
- To assuage the anti-reservation protesters, the P V Narasimha Rao government in 1991 introduced a **10% quota for the "economically backward sections"** among the forward castes.
- The Supreme Court struck this down in the **Indra Sawhney vs Union of India case (1993),** where it held that the Constitution recognized only social and educational and not economic — backwardness.
- The apex court, however, held reservation for OBCs as valid and directed that the creamy layer of OBC (those earning over a specified income) should not avail reservation facilities.
- The overall reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs was capped at 50%. Based on the order, the central government reserved 27% of seats in union civil posts and services, to be filled through direct recruitment, for OBCs.
- The quotas were subsequently enforced in central government educational institutions.

## National Commission of Backward Class

- The NCBC is a body set up under the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993.
- The 123rd Constitutional Amendment Bill passed in 2018 gave constitutional status and statutory powers to NCBC.
- The Commission shall consist of one chairman and four Members (Their term is of Three years):
    1. A Chairperson who is or has been a judge of the Supreme Court or of a High Court.
    2. A social scientist.
    3. Two persons who have special knowledge in matters relating to backward classes.
    4. Member-Secretary, who is or has been an officer of the Central

Government in the rank of a Secretary to the Government of India.

- It has the power to examine complaints regarding inclusion or exclusion of groups within the list of backward classes, and advise the central government in this regard.

## National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)

- The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) is a constitutional body established by Article 338 of the Constitution.
- The separate National Commission for SCs came into existence in 2004.
- It consists of a chairperson, a vice-chairperson and three other members.
- They are appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal.
- Their conditions of service and tenure of office are also determined by the President.

## Demand of grants

- Demand for Grants is the form in which estimates of expenditure from the Consolidated Fund.
- The Demand for Grants includes provisions with respect to revenue expenditure, capital expenditure, grants to State and Union Territory governments together with loans and advances.
- Usually, only one Demand for Grant is presented by each Ministry or Department.
- However, if necessary, the Ministry or Department can present more than Demand for Grant.
- According to Article 113 of the Indian Constitution, estimates of expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India in the Annual Financial Statement are to be voted in the Lok Sabha.
- These expenditures are submitted in the lower house of Parliament in the form of Demand for Grants.
- Each Demand gives the totals of “voted” and “charged” expenditure and also the grand total of the amount of expenditure for which the demand is presented.

## Other Grants

## Supplementary Grants

- When the authorised grants fall short of the required expenditure, an estimate is presented before the Parliament for Supplementary or Additional grants.

- The Comptroller and Auditor General of India bring such excesses to the notice of the Parliament.
- The Public Accounts Committee examines these excesses and gives recommendations to the Parliament.
- These grants are presented and passed by the Parliament before the end of the financial year (1st April to 31st March).

## Additional Grant

- It is granted when a need has arisen during the current financial year for additional expenditure upon some new service not contemplated in the budget for that year. E.g.:
- The demand for grants for the year 2019-20 also includes allocation of more than Rs 8,000 crore to the newly formed Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh and Rs 20 crore for upkeep of Ayodhya.

## Excess Grant

- It is granted when money has been spent on any service during a financial year in excess of the amount granted for that service in the budget for that year.
- It is voted by the Lok Sabha after the financial year (since it is regulated by the same procedure which is applicable in the case of a regular budget, i.e. voted by the Lok Sabha).
- Before the demands for excess grants are submitted to the Lok Sabha for voting, they must be approved by the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament.

## Vote of Credit

- It is granted for meeting an unexpected demand upon resources of India, when on account of the magnitude or the indefinite character of the service, the demand cannot be stated with the details ordinarily given in a budget.
- Hence, it is like a blank cheque given to the Executive by the Lok Sabha.

## Exceptional Grant

- It is granted for a special purpose and forms no part of the current service of any financial year.

## Token Grant

- It is granted when funds to meet the proposed expenditure on a new service can be made available by reappropriation.
- A demand for the grant of a token sum (of Re 1) is submitted to the vote of the Lok Sabha and if assented, funds are made available.
- Reappropriation involves transfer of funds from one head to another. It does not involve any additional expenditure.

## Votes on Account

- The Constitution has authorised the Lok Sabha to make any grant in advance in respect to the estimated expenditure for a part of the financial year, pending the completion of the voting of the demands for grants and the enactment of the appropriation bill. This provision is known as the 'vote on account'.
- It is passed (or granted) after the general discussion on budget is over. It is generally granted for two months for an amount equivalent to one-sixth of the total estimation.
- Note: Supplementary, additional, excess, exceptional grants and vote of credit are regulated by the same procedure which is applicable in the case of a regular budget.

## Constitutional Provision for other grants

- Supplementary, additional or excess grants and Votes on account, votes of credit and exceptional grants are defined in the Constitution of India 1949.
- Article 115: Supplementary, additional or excess grants.
- Article 116: Votes on account, votes of credit and exceptional grants.

## Herd Immunity

- Herd immunity refers to preventing an infectious disease from spreading by immunizing a certain percentage of the population.
- While the concept is most commonly used in the context of vaccination, herd community can also be achieved after enough people have become immune after being infected.
- The premise is that if a certain percentage of the population is immune, members of that group can no longer infect another person.
- This breaks the chain of infection through the community ("herd"), and prevents it from reaching those who are the most vulnerable.
- The scientific principle is that the presence of a large number of immune persons in the community, who will interrupt the transmission, provides

indirect protection to those who are not immune.

- To estimate the extent of spread and immunity, epidemiologists use a measure called the 'basic reproductive number' (R0).
- This indicates how many persons will be infected when exposed to an single case; an R0 of more than 1 indicates one person can spread the infection to multiple persons.
- Scientific evidence shows that a person with measles can infect around 12-18 persons; and a person with influenza can infect around 1.2-4.5 persons, depending on the season.
- On the basis of the available evidence from China, and according to various experts, R0 COVID-19 ranges between 2 and 3.
- Recently the UK government plans that it wanted the entire population to be exposed to the novel coronavirus infection, so that the majority could develop immunity to COVID-19.
- International community fears that Herd immunity as a strategy against COVID-19 questionable is very risky to seek herd immunity by allowing a large proportion of the population to get infected.
- Such a strategy at this stage, experts have underlined, would be based on many unknowns and variables.

## Project to Link Rivers in Europe

- The Danube-Oder-Elbe Canal intends to connect the Danube, Oder and Elbe rivers and thus provide another navigable link from the Black Sea to the North and Baltic Seas.
- The project is planned under Trans-European Transport Network.
- Under the project several hundred kilometers of artificial waterways would have to be built for the canal.
- In order to hoist freight ships over a low mountain range and overcome 250 meters in altitude, 70 locks would need to be constructed, even tunnels are being considered.
- Environmental organizations from across central and Eastern Europe have criticized a major project intending to link three rivers and provide seamless navigation between three of Europe's peripheral seas.
- If constructed, would destroy the region's river landscapes, in violation of EU environmental laws.
- This major project, costing at least 23 billion euros, fundamentally violates EU environmental and nature conservation directives and must not be allowed to become a reality.
- The acceleration of flood waves resulting from the construction of numerous locks, and canalized and deepened riverbeds is expected to

diminish flood protection and increase flood risks further.

- The canal would also result in a great loss of biodiversity, as the areas where the canal is be built, offer a safe haven to Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats, for birds as well as other animal and plant species.
- Moreover, the three rivers that are earmarked for the project, are not navigable in many section for much of the year.
- Due to the extremely low water level of the Elbe, its construction would not benefit freight shipping, but rare river habitats such as sandy banks and softwood floodplains would be destroyed.

## NASA’s Artemis Mission

- NASA’s Artemis mission is the next chapter in the US agency’s space exploration program.
- It aims to send first woman and next man on the Moon by 2024 and establish sustainable exploration by 2028.
- The mission will then act as the footstep for future missions like sending astronauts to Mars.
- NASA recently completed the final round of testing for its Orion spacecraft.
- It is meant to fly the Artemis mission that is expected to “return the next American man and deliver the first American woman to the surface of the Moon by 2024″.

**Source:** PIB, New on AIR, Indian Express

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