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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 upheld 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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