

POLITY

Sub-categorising OBCs

❖ **CONTEXT:** The Centre extended the tenure of The Commission to Examine Sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) headed by Justice G Rohini, , former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court

❖ **What is sub-categorisation of OBCs?**

- The idea is to create sub-categories within the larger group of OBCs for the purpose of reservation.
- OBCs are granted 27% reservation in jobs and education under the central government. This has been a legal debate for other reservation categories too in recent time, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court reopened the debate on sub-categorisation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for reservations.
- For OBCs, the debate arises out of the perception that only a few affluent communities among the over 2,600 included in the Central List of OBCs have secured a major part of the 27% reservation.
- The argument for creating sub-categories within OBCs is that it would ensure “equitable distribution” of representation among all OBC communities.
- It was to examine this that the Rohini Commission was constituted on October 2, 2017.

❖ **What is the Commission’s brief?**

- It was originally set up with three 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 OBCs 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-categorisation within such OBCs.
 3. To take up the exercise of identifying the respective castes or communities or sub-castes or synonyms in the Central List of OBCs and classifying them into their respective sub-categories.

A fourth term of reference was added on January 22, 2020.

4. 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.

This was added following a letter to the government from the Commission on July 30, 2019, in which it flagged “several ambiguities in the list as it stands now”.

CENTRAL GOVT EMPLOYEES BY SOCIAL CATEGORY						
	TOTAL	SC	ST	OBC	EWS	OTHERS
Group-A	50,068	6,440 (12.86%)	2,826 (5.64%)	8,455 (16.88%)	11 (0.02%)	32,226 (64.58%)
Group-B	1,25,732	20,954 (16.66%)	8,244 (6.55%)	19,829 (15.77%)	5 (0.04%)	76,700 (61.0%)
Group-C (excluding safai karmacharis)	3,22,503	58,744 (18.22%)	22,296 (6.91%)	72,710 (22.54%)	84 (0.03%)	1,68,639 (52.29%)
Group-D (safai karmacharis)	13,722	4,507 (32.72%)	1,056 (7.66%)	2,774 (20.14%)	0	5,435 (39.46%)
TOTAL	5,12,075	90,675 (17.70%)	34,422 (6.72%)	1,03,768 (20.26%)	100 (0.02%)	2,83,110 (55.28%)

❖ **When was it meant to submit its report?**

- At the time it was set up, the Commission was given 12 weeks to submit its report, but has since been given 10 extensions. The other member in the Commission is former journalist Jitendra Bajaj, director of the Centre for Policy Studies. In May this year, the government appointed Prof Bajaj the next chairperson of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR).
- In 2021, until August 31, the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) incurred an expenditure of Rs 54.01 lakh on the Commission, according to the NCBC response to an RTI query recently. This includes the salaries of Justice Rohini and Prof Bajaj, salaries of consultant and outsourcing staff, and miscellaneous and hospitality items. In response to an earlier RTI

query, according to the NCBC until December 2020, over Rs 1.92 crore had been spent on the Commission including salary, consultant fees and other expenses.

❖ **What progress has it made so far?**

- In its letter on July 30, 2019, the Commission wrote that it is ready with the draft report on sub-categorisation. Following the new term of reference added in January 22, the Commission began studying the list of communities in the central list.
- Among the challenges it has faced, one has been the absence of data for the population of various communities to compare with their representation in jobs and admissions.
- The Commission wrote to Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on December 12, 2018, requesting for an appropriate Budget provision for a proposed all-India survey for an estimate of the caste-wise population of OBCs. But survey was not under taken due to lok sabha poll announced.
- On August 31, 2018, Ministry of Home Affairs had announced that in Census 2021, data of OBCs will also be collected, but since then the government has been silent on this, whereas groups of OBCs have been demanding enumeration of OBCs in the Census.

❖ **What have its findings been so far?**

- In 2018, the Commission analysed the data of 1.3 lakh central jobs given under OBC quota over the preceding five years and OBC admissions to central higher education institutions, including universities, IITs, NITs, IIMs and AIIMS, over the preceding three years.
- The findings were: 97% of all jobs and educational seats have gone to just 25% of all sub-castes classified as OBCs; 24.95% of these jobs and seats have gone to just 10 OBC communities; 983 OBC communities — 37% of the total — have zero representation in jobs and educational institutions; 994 OBC sub-castes have a total representation of only 2.68% in recruitment and admissions.

❖ **What is the extent of OBC recruitment in central jobs?**

- According to data tabled in Parliament by MoS for Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, in Rajya Sabha on March 17, the total number of Group A to Group C employees (including safai karmacharis) was 5.12 lakh (see table). Of these, 17.70% are SC, 6.72% ST, 20.26% OBC (Other Backward Classes), and 0.02% EWS (Economically Weaker Sections). In Group-A, the highest tier among these, the representation of SCs is just 12.86%, of STs 5.64% and of OBCs 16.88%. Reservation for these communities is 15%, 7.5% and 27% respectively.
- These data cover 43 departments and government offices including Cabinet Secretariat, UPSC and Election Commission, but excluding the largest central government employers such as Railways and Department of Posts.
- Among Secretaries and Special Secretaries, only six belong to SCs and STs, and it claimed that no data regarding OBC is maintained.
- Out of 91 Additional Secretaries, the number of officers belonging to SC/ST and OBC communities are 10 and 4 respectively and out of 245 Joint Secretaries, the number of officers belonging to SC/ST and OBC communities are 26 and 29 respectively in various Ministries/Departments under Central Staffing Scheme.

PRELIMS

1. Derecho

❖ **CONTEXT:** A straight-line storm, most commonly seen in US, which turned the sky green recently.

❖ **What is a derecho?**

- A derecho, according to the US's National Weather Service is "a widespread, long-lived, straight-line windstorm" that is associated with a "band of rapidly moving showers or thunderstorms".
- The name comes from the Spanish word 'la derecha' which means 'straight'.
- Straight-line storms are those in which thunderstorm winds have no rotation unlike a tornado. These storms travel hundreds of miles and cover a vast area.
- Being a warm-weather phenomenon, a derecho generally – not always – occurs during summertime beginning May, with most hitting in June and July.

- However, they are a rare occurrence as compared to other storm systems like tornadoes or hurricanes.
- For a storm to be classified as a derecho it must have wind gusts of at least 93 km per hour; wind damage swath extending more than 400 km. The time gap between successive wind damage events should not be more than three hours.
- ❖ **Why did the sky turn green during the derecho that hit US recently?**
- Severe thunderstorms result in a 'green sky' due to light interacting with the huge amount of water they hold.
- That the big raindrops and hail scatter away all but the blue wavelengths due to which primarily blue light penetrates below the storm cloud. This blue then combines with the red-yellow of the afternoon or the evening sun to produce green.
- ❖ **Are there different types of derechos?**
- They fall into three categories – progressive, serial and hybrid.
- A progressive derecho is associated with a short line of thunderstorms that may travel for hundreds of miles along a relatively narrow path. It is a summer phenomenon.
- A serial derecho, on the other hand, has an extensive squall line – wide and long – sweeping across a large area. It usually occurs during spring or fall.
- Hybrid ones have the features of both progressive and serial derechos.
- ❖ **Where do derechos usually occur?**
- They mostly occur across central and eastern parts of the United States.
- The May 8, 2009 “Super Derecho” was one of the “most intense and unusual derechos ever observed” in the US as it swept from Kansas to Kentucky with wind speeds reaching up to 170 km/hr.
- Derechos have also been documented elsewhere across the world. In 2010, Russia witnessed its first documented derecho.
- They have also swept through Germany and Finland, and more recently in Bulgaria and Poland.
- 2. Cancer drug cuts risk of death in Covid-19 patients**
- ❖ **CONTEXT:** A newly published phase-3 study for the drug sabizabulin, initially developed to fight cancer, has shown that it cuts risk of death by about one-fourth in patients hospitalized with moderate to severe Covid-19.
- ❖ **What did the study look at and how?**
- The study, as its primary efficacy endpoint, looked at all-cause mortality, that is, proportion of patients who died during the study up to day 60 compared with placebo in the intent-to-treat population. The key secondary endpoints looked at differences in the trial and placebo arms in the days in the ICU, days on mechanical ventilation, and days in the hospital.
- Eligible patients were required to meet the following criteria to be included in the study like
- At least 18 years of age with laboratory-confirmed SARS-Cov-2 infection and baseline oxygen saturation (SpO2) level of 94% or lower on room air.
- Further, they needed to have a WHO-defined 9-point ordinal scale for clinical improvement score of 4, with a documented comorbidity such as asthma, chronic lung disease, diabetes, hypertension, severe obesity, 65 years of age or older, primarily residing in a nursing home or long-term care facility, or immunocompromised status, or WHO 5 status of non invasive ventilation or high-flow oxygen, or WHO 6 status of intubation and mechanical ventilation.
- Among those excluded from the study were pregnant and breast-feeding women, and patients on ventilation plus additional organ support such as long-term pressors, renal replacement therapy, or extracorporeal membrane oxygen.
- ❖ **What were the findings on mortality reduction among hospitalised Covid-19 patients?**
- According to the study, the cumulative mortality analysis showed that the reduction in deaths with sabizabulin started within the first week of treatment and the relative reduction in deaths reached 51.8% at day 29.
- With 204 participants in the study — 134 were administered the drug and 70 others a placebo — sabizabulin treatment resulted in a 24.9 percentage point absolute reduction and a 55.2% relative

reduction in deaths compared with placebo, among the subjects who were at high-risk for acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) and death.

- The beneficial effects of sabizabulin were observed starting as early as day 3 after dosing and by day 15, “statistically significant reductions in mortality were observed” with the beneficial effect maintained through day 29, when the mortality rate was observed to be 17% in the sabizabulin group compared to 35.3% in the placebo arm.
- This implies, the drug could reduce the risk of mortality by 18.3 percentage points by the 29th day.
- From the 29th day to the 60th, the death rate increased by 9.8 percentage points in the placebo group, that is the mortality rate stood at 45.1% at the end of 60th day in the placebo group, and the death rate increased by 3.2 percentage points in the sabizabulin-treated group, that is the mortality rate stood at 20.2 percent for the drug group by the 60th day.
- This indicates the drug could reduce the mortality risk by 24.9 percentage -points when compared with the placebo group.

❖ **Did the drug impact hospitalization?**

- Further, the study claims that there was a 43 percentage point relative reduction in days in the ICU with an average of 17.4 days spent by a sabizabulin subject compared to an average of 30.8 days spent by a placebo-arm subject in the ICU.
- The average days spent on mechanical ventilation too halved for the sabizabulin arm (14.4 days) compared to the placebo arm (28.5 days).

❖ **How does sabizabulin work?**

- The study notes that the drug, by targeting microtubule trafficking, has both dual anti-inflammatory and antiviral activity.
- According to Veru, the company which developed sabizabulin, the drug has shown in preclinical studies to have efficacy against many tumour types including castration resistant prostate cancer, triple negative breast cancer resistant to anthracyclines and taxanes as well as ovarian cancer, cervical cancer, lung cancer, melanoma, leukaemia, glioma, and pancreatic cancer.

3. **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Rules, 2020**

- The POCSO Act was enacted in 2012 to provide a robust legal framework for the protection of children from offences of sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornography while safeguarding the interests of children at every stage of the judicial process. To make the punishment for child abuse has been made more stringent, the government has notified the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Rules, 2020.

❖ **POCSO rule 2020**

- **Mandatory police verification:** The new rules include the provision of mandatory police verification of staff in schools and care homes, procedures to report sexual abuse material (pornography), imparting age-appropriate child rights education among others.
- **Reporting to Special Juvenile Police Unit:** For a crackdown on child pornography, any person who has received any pornographic material involving a child or any information regarding such pornographic material shall report the contents to the Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU) or police, or the cybercrime portal.
- **Child protection policy:** Under the rules, the State Governments have been asked to formulate a child protection policy based on the principle of zero-tolerance to violence against children, which shall be adopted by all institutions, organizations, or any other agency working with or coming in contact with children.
- **Periodic training:** The Central Government and every State Government shall provide periodic training including orientation programmes, sensitization workshops and refresher courses to all persons coming in contact with the children, to sensitize them about child safety and protection.
- **Age-appropriate curriculum:** The Centre and State Governments have been asked to prepare age-appropriate educational material and curriculum for children, informing them about various aspects of personal safety, including measures to protect their physical and virtual identity and to safeguard their emotional and mental wellbeing, prevention and protection from sexual offences and reporting mechanisms.

- **Orientation programme:** According to rules, orientation programme and intensive courses may also be organized for police personnel and forensic experts for building their capacities in their respective roles on a regular basis.
- **Background check:** Any institution housing children or coming in regular contact with children, including schools, crèches, sports academies or any other facility for children must ensure a police verification and background check on a periodic basis of every staff.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. What are the consequences of spreading of 'Dead Zones' on marine ecosystems?

"Dead Zone" is a more common term for hypoxia, which refers to a reduced level of oxygen in the water in some parts of the world's oceans and large lakes. In March 2004, Global Environment Outlook Year Book, published by the UN Environment Programme, reported 146 dead zones in the world's oceans. One of the largest dead zones forms in the Gulf of Mexico every spring. Hypoxic zones can occur naturally but climate change, nutrients run-off from the land, and eutrophication are leading to algal bloom and causing further depletion of oxygen level in water. As a result dead zones are spreading at much faster pace.

Consequences of spreading dead zones on marine ecosystem:

- The reduced dissolved oxygen in ocean water results in loss of marine life thus the habitats which were teeming with life become biological desert.
- Toxic algal blooms release toxins that can poison fish, molluscs and marine mammals like dolphins. Thus, affecting marine ecosystem by altering its food chain.
- The reproductive problems emanate when the oxygen level depletes i.e. there is lower egg count and less spawning.
- Slow moving bottom-dwelling creatures like clams, lobsters and oysters are unable to escape the dead zone and face extinction.
- When fast moving marine species flee from the dead zones and occupy a new habitat, they cause overcrowding of their new habitats and affect the ecosystem services over there.

It is clear that the spread of dead zones can affect most marine ecosystems and have socio-economic ramifications due to human dependency on marine goods and services.

MCQs

1. Consider the following statements with regards to Rohini Commission recently seen in news
 1. Inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation among the castes or communities included in the broad category of OBCs with reference to such classes included in the Central List.
 2. Suggest mechanism, criteria, norms and parameters in a scientific approach for sub-categorisation within OBCs.
 3. 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

Which of the above statement/s is/are the term of references of Rohini commission?

 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 and 3 only
 - c) 1 and 3 only
 - d) All of the above
2. Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) is a standard criteria for
 - a) Measuring oxygen level in blood
 - b) Computing oxygen levels in forest ecosystems
 - c) Pollution assay in aquatic ecosystem
 - d) Assessing oxygen levels in high altitude regions
3. With reference to Derecho storm consider the following statements
 1. This type of storm confined to only tropical region
 2. They are frequently occur as compared to other storm systems like tornadoes or hurricanes
 3. They are categorised as progressive, serial and hybrid

Which of the above statement/s is/are not correct?

 - a) 1 and 2 only
 - b) 2 and 3 only
 - c) 1 and 3 only

- d) 3 only
4. A drug called sabizabulin frequently in news is related to which of the following disease?
- TB
 - Cancer**
 - Hepatitis-c
 - Anthrax
5. With reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, consider the following:
- The Right to Development
 - The Right to Expression
 - The Right to Recreation
- Which of the above is/are the Rights of the child?
- 1 only
 - 1 and 3 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 1, 2 and 3**
6. Consider the following statements with reference to Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POSCO) Act 2012
- The Act defines a child as any person below eighteen years of age
 - The act mandates that investigation in the cases is to be completed in two months (from the date of registration of FIR) and trial in six months
- Choose the correct statement /s using the codes given below
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2**
 - Neither 1 nor 2
7. Which of the following statements is not correct?
- Hepatitis B virus is transmitted much like HIV.
 - Hepatitis B, unlike Hepatitis C, does not have a vaccine.**
 - Globally, the number of people infected with Hepatitis B and C viruses is several times more than those infected with HIV.
 - Some of those infected with Hepatitis B and C viruses do not show the symptoms for many years.
8. Traditional folk-dance form of Dhap is in news , is associated with which of the following?
- Odisha**
 - Jharkhand
 - Sikkim
 - Chhatisgarh
9. 'Contingent Reserve Arrangement' is a framework offered by
- World Bank
 - IMF
 - BRICS**
 - WTO
10. The term 'TiHAN' recently seen in news is associated with which of the following?
- Irrigation facility
 - Autonomous navigation facility**
 - Car safety assessment facility
 - Satellite launch vehicle