

Caste-based census

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In news

The Chief Minister of Bihar has raised the issue of Caste based census recently, saying it will help in better decisions for the people's development and welfare.

Demand for caste based census

There has been a demand for caste based census from the following parties:

- The demand usually came from among those belonging to Other Backward Classes (OBC) and other deprived sections.
- Maharashtra Assembly which passed a resolution on January 8 urging the Centre to hold a caste-based Census in 2021.
- The constitutional body National Commission for Backward Classes urged the government to collect data on the population of OBCs "as part of Census of India 2021 exercise.
- A writ petition seeking caste enumeration is pending in the Supreme Court, which issued notices on this on February 26 this year.
- However, sections from the upper castes oppose the idea.

Rohini Commission for the sub-categorisation of reservation for OBCs

- Justice Rohini Commission proposed for the sub-categorisation of reservation for Other Backward Class (OBCs).
- The commission was set up in 2017 and has recommended splitting 27% reservation for the OBCs into different categories for equitable distribution of benefits among

different sub-castes to ensure that the benefits reached the really deprived sections.

- After several extensions, the panel submitted its report in February 2021 dividing 2,633 OBC castes on the Central list into four sub-categories for splitting the 27% quota into 2, 6, 9, and 10%.

Type of caste data is published in the Census

- Every Census in independent India from 1951 to 2011 has published data on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, but not on other castes.
- However, in 1941, caste-based data was collected but not published.
- India's last caste census was conducted 90 years ago in 1931.

Current government's stand on caste based census

- The Centre has said, as a matter of policy, there will be no enumeration as per caste other than that for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) for the census.
- It has cited the provisions of the Constitution and reservation of seats for SCs and STs in Lok Sabha and in the assemblies as per their proportion in the population.
- The then UPA government in 2010 had decided to go for a full-fledged Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC).
- The SECC was conducted by the Ministry of Rural Development in rural areas and the Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation in urban areas.
- The SECC data excluding caste data was finalised and published by the two ministries in 2016.
- The raw caste data was handed over to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, which formed an Expert Group under former NITI Aayog Vice-Chairperson Arvind Pangaria for classification and categorisation of data.

History of Census in India

- Beginning from 1872 when the first census was conducted in India non-synchronously in different parts.
- But the first synchronous census in India was held in 1881.
- The responsibility of conducting the decennial Census rests with the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India under Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India
- The Census Organisation was set up on an ad-hoc basis for each Census till the 1951 Census.
- The Census Act was enacted in 1948 to provide for the scheme of conducting population census with duties and responsibilities of census officers.