General Studies-2: Topic: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes;

Sub-Categorisation of OBCs

1) Introduction
   • The Union Cabinet approved to set up a commission which will examine the issue of sub-categorisation of the Other Backward Classes (OBC).
   • The proposed commission, will be set up under Article 340 of the Constitution
   • In the Indian Constitution, OBCs are described as "socially and educationally backward classes".

2) Mandate of the Committee
   • Examine the “extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation” among Central OBC list.
   • Work out the mechanism, criteria and parameters for the actual sub-categorisation.
   • Bringing order to the Central list of OBCs by removing any repetitions.

3) Background
   • The Supreme Court in Indra Sawhney and others vs. Union of India case (1992) had observed that there is no Constitutional or legal bar on states for categorizing backward classes.
   • Already 11 States, including Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Jammu region have such a categorisation in State government jobs.
   • There is no sub categorisation in the central list.

4) Need for Sub-Categorisation
   • The benefits of reservation have not been distributed equally.
   • Large segments of the weaker sections and backward classes continue to have no access to quality education or meaningful employment.
   • The relatively rich and dominant sections among the backward castes have tended to take up a larger share of the reservation pie.
   • Further differentiating caste groups under backward classes will seek to ensure more equitable distribution of reservation benefits
   • There is inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation because of the broad categories of OBCs included in the central list.
   • The National Commission for Backward Classes had recommended sub-categorisation in 2011
   • A standing committee too had recommended this.

5) Implications
   • The move could have a far-reaching political and social impact
   • It will ensure that the benefits are distributed fairly among constituent castes instead of going only to a few dominant ones.
   • The Centre’s decision will be a significant addition to the Mandal Commission-based OBC reservation regulations.
   • Politically, this can be seen as an attempt by the government to reach out to the most backward castes among the OBCs.

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6) **Challenges**
   - It is likely to face opposition from dominant OBC groups
   - The regional parties championing the interests of dominant OBC castes are likely to oppose such sub-categorisation.
   - An earlier attempt to provide sub-quotas for OBCs in Andhra Pradesh was stalled by courts on the ground that religion-based quota is not permitted.

7) **Creamy layer cap raised**
   - The Union Cabinet increased the “creamy layer” ceiling for the OBCs to Rs. 8 lakh per annum from the existing Rs. 6 lakh for Central government jobs.
   - This means that the umbrella of reservation is widened and those earning up to Rs. 8 lakh per annum would now get the benefits.

8) **Some Facts**
   - The OBCs are entitled to 27% reservations in public sector employment and higher education.
   - The list of OBCs is maintained by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
   - Under Article 340 of the Indian Constitution, it is obligatory for the government to promote the welfare of the OBCs.
   - The Constitution refers to the term ‘backward classes’ in Articles 15(4), 16(4) and 340(1).
   - Articles 15(4) and 16(4) empower the State to make special provisions for any socially and educationally backward class of citizens.