

12 June, 2023

## Reservation Policy in India

**Context:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah has stated that reservations for the any religious minority community are in violation of the Constitution.

### What is Reservation?

- Reservation policy in India reserves a percentage of seats or positions in educational institutions, government jobs, and legislative bodies.
- It is designed to provide opportunities for social and educational upliftment to historically disadvantaged and marginalized communities.
- The policy aims to address social, economic, and educational disadvantages faced by these communities.
- The Constitution of India includes provisions for reservation for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and economically weaker sections (EWS) of society.
- Reservations promote equality, social justice, and inclusivity in Indian society.

### Evolution and Current Scenario of Reservation in India

- **Pre-Independence Era:** British colonial government introduced reservation through measures like the Communal Award in 1932.
- **Constitution of India:** Indian Constitution, adopted in 1950, included reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in legislatures and jobs.
- **Mandal Commission:** Established in 1980, it recommended 27% reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in government jobs and education.
- **Mandal Commission Implementation:** In 1990, OBC reservations were introduced, leading to protests and debates.
- **Tamil Nadu's Case:** In 1990, reservation in Tamil Nadu was taken to 69% with a bill effecting the same in 1993 and was added to 9<sup>th</sup> Schedule.
- **Subsequent Expansion:** Reservations extended to economically weaker sections (EWS) in 2019 by the 103<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act.
- **Supreme Court Guidelines:** The Supreme Court has upheld the constitutional validity of reservations and provided guidelines for fair implementation.
- **Manipur Violence (2023):** The violence in Manipur has taken place after the HC's observation that the government can look into prospect of Meiteis being given ST status.

### Constitutional Provisions of Reservation

- Part XVI of the Constitution deals with the reservation of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in Central and State legislatures.
- **Article 15(4) and 16(4)** enable the State and Central Governments to reserve seats in government services for SC and ST members.
- The Constitution was amended by the Constitution (77th Amendment) Act, 1995, to insert a **new clause (4A) in Article 16**, allowing reservation in promotions.
- The **Constitution (85th Amendment) Act, 2001 modified clause (4A)** to provide consequential seniority to SC and ST candidates promoted through reservation.
- The Constitutional 81st Amendment Act, 2000 introduced **Article 16(4B)**, allowing states to fill unfilled reserved vacancies in the following year, bypassing the fifty percent reservation ceiling.
- **Article 330 and 332** provide for specific representation through reserved seats for SCs and STs in the Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies, respectively.
- **Article 243D** mandates reservation of seats for SCs and STs in every Panchayat.
- **Article 243T** ensures reservation of seats for SCs and STs in every Municipality.
- **Article 335** states that the claims of SCs and STs should be considered while maintaining the efficiency of the administration.

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## Judicial Scrutiny of Reservation

- **The State of Madras v. Smt. Champakam Dorairajan (1951)** case led to the First amendment in the Constitution and highlighted the absence of reservation provisions in Article 15.
- **Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992)** case examined the scope of Article 16(4) and introduced the concept of excluding the creamy layer from reservation benefits.
- **M. Nagaraj v. Union Of India (2006)** case outlined the constitutional requirements for reservation policies, including backwardness, inadequate representation, and preserving administrative efficiency.
- **Jarnail Singh vs Lachhmi Narain Gupta (2018)** case confirmed the exclusion of the creamy layer from SC/ST reservation benefits in promotions.
- In May 2019, the Supreme Court upheld a Karnataka law allowing reservations in promotions for SCs and STs with consequential seniority.

## Particulate Pollution

**Context:** According to a report by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), particulate pollution is on the rise in cities of Rajasthan.

### What is Particulate Matter?

PM stands for particulate matter (also called particle pollution): the term for a mixture of solid particles and liquid droplets found in the air. Some particles, such as dust, dirt, soot, or smoke, are large or dark enough to be seen with the naked eye. Others are so small they can only be detected using an electron microscope.

Particle pollution includes:

- **PM<sub>10</sub>:** inhalable particles, with diameters that are generally 10 micrometers and smaller; and
- **PM<sub>2.5</sub>:** fine inhalable particles, with diameters that are generally 2.5 micrometers and smaller.
  - **How small is 2.5 micrometers?** The average human hair is about 70 micrometers in diameter – making it 30 times larger than the largest fine particle.



### Sources of Particulate Matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>)

- **Outdoor Sources:**
  - Vehicles (emissions from cars, trucks, buses, off-road vehicles)
  - Combustion (burning of fuels like wood, heating oil, coal)
  - Industrial emissions
  - Construction and demolition activities
  - Dust from unpaved roads
  - Agricultural activities (dust from plowing, harvesting, etc.)
  - Natural sources (windblown dust, wildfires)
- **Indoor Sources:**
  - Tobacco smoke
  - Cooking activities
  - Use of solid fuels for cooking and heating
  - Burning of candles or oil lamps
  - Fireplaces and fuel-burning space heaters
  - Dust from indoor activities and furnishings

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Recommended AQG Levels

| Pollutant                           | Averaging time | Interim target |     |      |    | AQG level |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----|------|----|-----------|
|                                     |                | 1              | 2   | 3    | 4  |           |
| PM <sub>2.5</sub> µg/m <sup>3</sup> | Annual         | 35             | 25  | 15   | 10 | 5         |
|                                     | 24-hour*       | 75             | 50  | 37.5 | 25 | 15        |
| PM <sub>10</sub> µg/m <sup>3</sup>  | Annual         | 70             | 50  | 30   | 20 | 15        |
|                                     | 24-hour*       | 150            | 100 | 75   | 50 | 45        |

### National Clean Air Programme (NCAP):

- Launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in January 2019.
- Aims to develop a national framework for air quality management with a time-bound reduction target.
- Seeks to reduce the concentration of PM10 and PM2.5 particles by at least 20% in the next five years, with 2017 as the base year for comparison.
- Covers 132 non-attainment cities identified by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).
- Non-attainment cities are those that have not met the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for over five years.
- **NAAQS include standards for various pollutants:**
  - PM10 (particulate matter of diameter 10 micrometres or less)
  - PM2.5 (particulate matter of diameter 2.5 micrometres or less)
  - SO2 (sulphur dioxide)
  - NO2 (nitrogen dioxide)
  - CO (carbon monoxide)
  - NH3 (ammonia)
  - Ozone
  - Lead
  - Benzene
  - Benzo-Pyrene
  - Arsenic
  - Nickel

### Other Initiatives for Air Quality Management

- **SAFAR Portal:** Real-time air quality information and weather forecasts for monitoring pollutants.
- **Graded Response Action Plan (for Delhi)**
- Measures to control pollution, including **BS-VI vehicles, Electric Vehicles, and Odd-Even** Policy.
- New **Commission for Air Quality Management:** Coordinated efforts to tackle air pollution nationally.
- **Subsidy for Turbo Happy Seeder (THS) Machine:** Encourages farmers to reduce stubble burning.
- **National Air Quality Monitoring Programme (NAMP):** Regular monitoring of SO2, NO2, PM10, and PM2.5 pollutants.

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## Coupling of Power Exchanges

**Context:** The Ministry of Power has instructed the Central Electricity Regulatory Authority (CERC) to initiate the process of coupling multiple power exchanges in India.

- The objective of coupling is to ensure uniformity in price discovery of energy at trading platforms.
- Currently, **India has three power exchanges:** Indian Electricity Exchange (IEX), Power Exchange of India (PXIL), and Hindustan Power Exchange (HPX).
- After coupling, the price discovery of electricity would be uniform across exchanges.
- The decision to implement market coupling is expected to improve service levels, enhance transparency, and facilitate better price discovery.
- Market coupling is not applicable in India's case as the country already operates with a voluntary market framework where all exchanges have equal opportunities.
- The government has requested CERC to initiate the process of consultation and finalization for market coupling.
- The objective and necessity of coupling in the current market framework will be examined during the process.

### Single energy market

Power Ministry has asked CERC to start the process of coupling power exchanges to ensure uniformity in energy price discovery



■ As of now, buyers and sellers who trade energy discover spot prices

separately at different power trading platforms

■ India has three power exchanges – IEX, PXIL and HPX

■ IEX: coupling is relevant only where exchanges are in different geographies

## What is coupling of Exchanges?

- Coupling of power exchanges involves integrating multiple power exchanges into a unified system.
- It aims to ensure uniformity in price discovery and trading of electricity across different exchanges.
- The process enables seamless trading of electricity between buyers and sellers across all integrated exchanges.
- Coupling promotes transparency and efficiency in the market by establishing a common platform for price discovery.
- It enhances competition among exchanges and facilitates better market dynamics.
- Coupling helps eliminate price disparities and inconsistencies in electricity trading.
- The objective is to create a more robust and unified market for electricity, benefiting both buyers and sellers.
- By coupling exchanges, it becomes easier to compare prices and make informed decisions for market participants.
- Coupling can lead to a more efficient allocation of resources and a reduction in power tariffs.

## Central Electricity Regulatory Authority (CERC)

- CERC is a statutory body established under Section 76 of the Electricity Act, 2003.
- It has several mandatory functions, including regulating the tariff of generating companies owned or controlled by the Central Government.
- CERC also regulates the inter-State transmission of electricity and determines tariffs for such transmission.
- The commission issues licenses for transmission and electricity trading in inter-State operations.
- It adjudicates disputes related to generating companies and transmission licensees, and has the power to refer disputes for arbitration.
- CERC is responsible for formulating national electricity policy and tariff policy.
- It promotes competition, efficiency, and investment in the electricity industry.
- The commission has the authority to levy fees, specify grid standards and enforce quality standards for licensees.
- Additionally, it performs any other functions assigned under the Electricity Act, 2003.

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## NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

### Supersonic BrahMos



**Context:** Supersonic BrahMos, developed through a joint venture between India's DRDO and Russia's NPOM, marks 25 years since its inception and 22 years since its first supersonic launch.

**Supersonic BrahMos:**

Supersonic BrahMos refers to the BrahMos missile system, which is a joint venture between India and Russia. It is a supersonic cruise missile known for its high speed and precision strike capabilities. The name "BrahMos" is derived from the Brahmaputra and Moskva rivers, symbolizing the collaboration between the two countries.

**Supersonic Capability:**

The BrahMos missile's supersonic speed and precision strike capability have garnered international attention. Its ability to travel at speeds of Mach 2.8 makes it one of the fastest cruise missiles in the world.

**Versatility and Adaptability:**

The BrahMos missile's versatility and diverse deployment capabilities have expanded India's operational options on various platforms, including land, sea, air, and submarines. This adaptability has positioned India as a nation capable of developing and fielding advanced weapons systems across different domains.

**Universal Supersonic Missile:**

BrahMos is known as a universal supersonic missile due to its ability to be launched vertically or horizontally, making it suitable for different launch platforms.

### G20 SAI Summit



**Context:** Recently, it is announced that the three-day Supreme Audit Institutions-20 (SAI20) Summit will take place in Goa from 12th to 14th June 2023

**G20 SAI Summit:**

The SAI20 Summit is being held under the guiding philosophy of India's G20 Presidency, "Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam," which means "One Earth, One Family and One Future."

The G20 SAI Summit refers to the annual summit of the Supreme Audit Institutions-20 (SAI20) Engagement Group, which is a part of the G20 framework. The G20 (Group of Twenty) is an international forum comprising the world's major economies, including both developed and developing countries.

**Objective:**

The objective of the G20 SAI Summit is to promote cooperation among the SAIs in addressing global challenges and fostering accountability in governance. It serves as a platform for sharing experiences, best practices and knowledge in areas related to audit, governance and public financial management.

**Role and responsibilities:**

The SAI20 Engagement Group will discuss and establish its role and responsibilities in fostering accountability in governance and strategically partnering with governments to address global challenges.

**Chairperson:**

The Chair of the SAI20 Engagement Group is the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) of India, Shri Girish Chandra Murmu.

### Government e-Marketplace (GeM)



**Context:** Recently, the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) is set to organize Buyer-Seller Workshops in all 75 districts of Uttar Pradesh starting from June 12.

**The Government e-Marketplace (GeM):**

GeM is an online platform that provides a one-stop solution for procurement of goods and services by government entities, eliminating the need for physical paperwork and manual processes.

**Aim:**

The workshops aim to enhance the understanding of GeM's functionalities among buyers and sellers in the state, as well as provide a platform for addressing queries and concerns.

**Responsible Departments:**

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, specifically the Department of Commerce, is responsible for the operation of the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) in India.

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|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                              | <p><b>Products and services available on GeM:</b></p> <p><b>Products/Goods:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Office Supplies:</b> Stationery items, office equipment, furniture, etc.</li> <li>➤ <b>IT and Electronics:</b> Computers, laptops, printers, peripherals, software, etc.</li> <li>➤ <b>Vehicles:</b> Cars, motorcycles, bicycles, etc.</li> <li>➤ <b>Medical and Healthcare:</b> Medicines, medical equipment, hospital supplies, etc.</li> <li>➤ <b>Construction and Building Materials:</b> Cement, bricks, pipes, electrical equipment, etc.</li> <li>➤ <b>Furniture and Furnishings:</b> Chairs, tables, beds, mattresses, curtains, etc.</li> <li>➤ <b>Security and Safety:</b> CCTV cameras, fire safety equipment, alarms, locks, etc.</li> <li>➤ <b>Apparel and Uniforms:</b> Clothing, uniforms, footwear, accessories, etc.</li> <li>➤ <b>Sports and Fitness:</b> Sports equipment, gym equipment, fitness accessories, etc.</li> </ul> <p><b>Services:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Transportation and Logistics:</b> Freight, courier, transport services, warehousing, etc.</li> <li>➤ <b>Professional Services:</b> Legal, accounting, consulting, auditing, training, etc.</li> <li>➤ <b>IT and Telecom Services:</b> Software development, website design, network services, etc.</li> <li>➤ <b>Advertising and Media Services:</b> Print media, digital media, advertising agencies, etc.</li> <li>➤ <b>Facility Management Services:</b> Cleaning, maintenance, housekeeping, security services, etc.</li> <li>➤ <b>Printing and Publishing Services:</b> Printing, publishing, graphic design, etc.</li> <li>➤ <b>Event Management Services:</b> Event planning, organizing, catering, etc.</li> <li>➤ <b>Research and Development Services:</b> Scientific research, technical studies, analysis, etc.</li> <li>➤ <b>Healthcare Services:</b> Medical consultation, diagnostic services, telemedicine, etc.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC)</b></p> | <p><b>Context:</b> Recently, the three states, namely Gujarat, Maharashtra and Telangana have rejected a proposal approved by the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) of the Central Government to test a new type of transgenic cotton seed.</p> <p><b>Establishment and legal framework:</b><br/>The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) is a statutory committee established under the "Rules for the Manufacture, Use/Import/Export and Storage of Hazardous Micro Organisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells (Rules, 1989)" framed under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.</p> <p><b>Ministry under which GEAC functions:</b><br/>The GEAC operates under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&amp;CC).</p> <p><b>Name change:</b><br/>The committee was initially known as the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee and was later renamed the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee in 2010.</p> <p><b>Functions and responsibilities:</b><br/>The GEAC is responsible for appraising activities involving the large-scale use of hazardous microorganisms and recombinants from an environmental perspective. It assesses proposals related to the release of genetically engineered organisms and products into the environment, including experimental field trials.</p> <p><b>Composition:</b><br/>The GEAC is chaired by the Special Secretary/Additional Secretary of the MoEF&amp;CC and co-chaired by a representative from the Department of Biotechnology (DBT). Currently, it consists of 24 members who meet monthly to review applications in the relevant areas.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |



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