

Current Affairs search results for: "election commissioner"

1. The Election Commission of India has announced the schedule for the assembly election in Goa, Punjab, Manipur, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. (Jan. 8, 2022)

Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra said for the 690 Legislative Assembly seats of the five states all elections will be completed in seven phases.

- **For 403 seats of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly** whose term is ending in May, election will be completed in seven phases i.e. first phase on February 10th, second phase on February 14th, third phase on February 20th, fourth phase on February 23rd, fifth phase on February 27th, sixth phase on March 3rd and seventh phase on March 7th respectively.
- **For 117 seats of the Punjab Legislative Assembly** whose term is ending in March, election will be completed in single phase on February 14.
- **For 70 seats of the Uttarakhand Legislative Assembly** whose term is ending in March, election will be completed in single phase on February 14.
- **For 60 seats of the Manipur Legislative Assembly** whose term is ending in March, election will be completed in two phases on February 27 and March 3 respectively.
- **For 40 seats of the Goa Legislative Assembly** whose term is ending in March, election will be completed in single phase on February 14.
- **The results of all five states will be announced on March 10.**
- Basic preparations will be taken to ensure Covid-19 safe election, hassle-free voter experience and maximum voters participation
- A total of 18.34 crore electors including service voters will take part in this election. Out of this, 8.55 crore are women electors.
- EVMs and VVPATs will be utilized in all the polling stations. Election Commission has already made arrangements to ensure an adequate number of EVMs and VVPATs for the smooth conduct of elections. In case of Senior citizens above 80 years of age, persons with disabilities and Covid-19 patients vote by postal ballot can be cast.
- No yatra, procession, road show, cycle bike, padyatras or vehicle rally or physical rally by political parties will be allowed up to 15 January. The situation will be reviewed and fresh instructions to be issued later.

No victory processions will be allowed after declaration of the results.

2. Caste Census in India (Dec. 28, 2021)

Recently a writ petition was filed in Supreme Court by the Maharashtra government seeking directions to the Union government to **collect data on the Backward Class of Citizens (BCC) of rural India during the enumeration of the 2021 census.**

- It also asked the Centre to disclose the raw caste data on other backward classes (OBCs) collected during **Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC)-2011.**
 - In January 2021, The Maharashtra legislative assembly and in November Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly passed a resolution urging the Centre to hold a caste-based Census for Other Backward Caste (OBC) in 2021. Since then many other political parties like Janta Dal United (Bihar) and Andhra Pradesh have demanded the same.

What is caste census and its historical background

- The first census in India **began in 1872** (held under The Governor-General of **India Lord Mayo**) and the periodic count in 1881 under British rule. Since then, the data on caste was always included, though only till 1931.
- Every **Census in independent India from 1951 to 2011 has published data on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes**, but not on **other castes**. It, however, has never counted **OBC's, the lower and intermediate castes, which according to the Mandal commission make up around 52 per cent of the country's population**. All castes other than Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are counted under the general category.
- **Constitutional Mandate:** Our Constitution too favours conducting a caste census. **Article 340 mandates the appointment of a commission** to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes and make recommendations as to the steps that should be taken by governments.

Caste census: It is the **procedure of systematically acquiring and recording the caste-wise** tabulation of India's population.

- Caste Census is under the **administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs: Registrar General of India (RGI) and Census Commissioner of India**.
- The first census in India **began in 1872** (held under The Governor-General of **India Lord Mayo**) and the periodic census in 1881 under British rule. Since then, the data on caste was always included, till 1931.
- After Independence, census data included the census of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Caste in the general census of India held after every ten years
- For the first time after Independence, caste census for all castes were held in the 2011 census.
- The 2011 caste census was titled as "Socio Economic Caste Census 2011(SECC)".

Socio Economic Caste Census 2011:

- **SECC-2011:** It is a study of **socio economic status of rural and urban households and allows ranking of households based on predefined parameters**.
 - SECC 2011 has three census components which were conducted by three separate authorities but under the overall coordination of the **Department of Rural Development in the Government of India**.
 - Census in **Rural Areas** has been conducted by the **Department of Rural Development (DoRD)**. Census in **Urban areas** is under the administrative jurisdiction of the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA)**.
 - SECC-2011's caste data of 130 crore Indians have been with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
 - Due to flaws in the data, an expert committee headed by the then Vice-Chairman of the NITI Aayog, Arvind Panagariya was formed.
 - But since other members of the committee were not named, the committee never met, and as a result, no action was taken on the raw data to collate it into publishable findings.
 - **Status of 2021 caste census:** The Union government has clearly told the Supreme Court that a **caste census in 2021 "would not be feasible"** and

that it has taken a “conscious policy decision” to not to **seek information regarding any other caste, except SCs and STs. Therefore inclusion of OBCs is not possible in the caste census.**

Government’s Stand:

- The Union government has ruled out conducting a Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC), stating that a caste census (except that for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes done traditionally) is **unfeasible, administratively difficult and cumbersome.**
- It has refused to make public even the **raw caste data of the SECC-2011.** According to the central government the entire data set is flawed and the census unreliable, rendering it unusable for the purposes of reservations and policy.
 - The flaws in the data stem primarily from the fact that **no registry of castes was prepared before conducting the 2011 caste census.** This resulted in mistakes by enumerators, who spelt the same caste in dozens of different ways.
- Then it argues that the **judiciary cannot direct the government to** conduct a caste census because it is a **“policy decision”** and the judiciary cannot interfere with government policy.

Why there is a demand for Caste census

- **For efficient welfare Programmes:** India runs the world’s largest affirmative welfare programme based on caste identity. Reservation in educational institutes and government jobs are provided on the basis of caste identities.
- Therefore, **enumeration of population of each caste group** would help the **government formulate more accurate welfare programmes.**
- It is important for poverty alleviation, ending unemployment, and equitable distribution of resources for the OBCs.
- Government relies on Census data for identifying and classifying the communities which need to be targeted for its various welfare programmes . Government has this data on SC and ST but it is still using extrapolated 1931 caste data of OBC
- **Political representation in Local bodies:** In the Local bodies there is a provision for reservation of OBC under the 73 rd and 74th constitutional amendment Due to absence of accurate data the reservation for OBC has become a politically sensitive issue and this was the main reason for Maharashtra to move the SC
- **Political reason:** Parties such as JDU, RJD, SP, BSP, RJD and the DMK depend on certain caste **groups for their political strength.** They are the ones leading the heavy campaign for caste census along with Census 2021.
 - Chief Minister of Bihar Nitish Kumar has argued that the current caste benefit system (through reservations in education, jobs and election) does not give representation in accordance with caste demography. This means that the OBCs are under-represented in public office.
 - In the states like Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, OBCs votes have a significant role in the elections due to high demographic representations. Therefore regional Parties are demanding it vocally.

What are the problem in Caste census

- **Administrative issues:** There is a Central list of OBCs and State-specific list of OBCs. Some States do not have a list of OBCs; **some States have a list of OBCs and a sub-set called Most Backward Classes.**
 - Further, names of some castes are found in both the list of Scheduled Castes and list of OBCs.
 - There are certain open-ended categories in the lists such as orphans and destitute children which often creates administrative hurdles for the categorisation.
 - Scheduled Castes converted to Christianity or Islam are also treated differently in different States.
 - The status of a migrant from one State to another and the status of children of inter-caste marriage, in terms of caste classification should also be taken into consideration.
- **Different data sets:** Different data **sets based on sample surveys might not be a true reflection of the current caste headcount** in India. These data sets also differ from the Mandal Commission estimates that form the basis of caste-based reservations and policy formulation.
 - Recently, the figures of the **United District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE)** showed schooling data for each caste group. It shows OBC children comprise 45 percent students in primary schools, SCs 19 per cent SCs and STs 11 per cent. The Remaining 25 per cent were from the upper caste group.
- **Political opposition:** Some political parties are against it as it will further enhance the caste division in India.
- Further, it has been said that there has been enough programmes and policies for the upliftment of the backward classes.

-Written by Rashmi

3. Person in News (Dec. 12, 2021)

1. Veteran Kannada actor Shivaram passes away

Shivaram was associated with the Kannada film industry since the late 1950s. He was the recipient of several awards, including Padma Bhushan, Dr. Rajkumar Lifetime Achievement Award.

2. Former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Rosaiah passes away

Former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Konijeti Rosaiah passed away in Hyderabad.

He became the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh in 2009 after the death of Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy in 2009 in a helicopter crash.

3. Senior journalist Vinod Dua dies at 67

Vinod Dua was a prominent Hindi journalist who worked in Doordarshan and NDTV India. In 1996, he became the first electronic media journalist to be bestowed with the Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Award. He was awarded the Padma Shri for Journalism in 2008 by the Government of India.

4. New Provident Fund Commissioner

Madhya Pradesh cadre IAS officer **Neelam Shammi Rao** is appointed as new Provident Fund Commissioner in the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) on 4th December 2021 by the Government of India.

5. Sunil Arora joins advisory body of IDEA

- Former Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora has been appointed to the advisory council of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).

6. Padma Shri awardee Nanda Kishore Prusty passes away

Nanda Prusty was a 98-year-old school teacher from Jajpur, popularly known as Nanda Sir who provided free education to generations of children since independence.

- He was awarded Padma Shri 2021 under the "Literature and Education" category by President Ram Nath Kovind in November.

7. Olaf Scholz sworn in as Germany's new chancellor

Social Democratic Party leader and Germany's Finance Minister Olaf Scholz was elected by the German Parliament as the next Chancellor of the country on 8th December 2021.

- Olaf Scholz succeeded outgoing chancellor Angela Merkel.
- He will lead a three-party coalition government in Germany.

8. New French Open Director

Former world number one Amelie Mauresmo, 42, will succeed Guy Forget, as a new Director of French Open.

- Mauresmo is French Open's first female director.

9. Indian Weightlifters in Commonwealth Games

Indian weightlifters Jeremy Lalrinnunga and Achinta Sheuli clinched gold medals in their respective categories at the 2021 Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships in Uzbekistan on Friday.

10. Yash Dhull named captain of Indian Team in U-19 Asia Cup

Delhi batsman Yash Dhull will lead a 20 member India squad in the upcoming Under19 Asia Cup scheduled to be held in the UAE from December 23.

11. Indian Mathematician receives 2021 DST-ICTP-IMU Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians from Developing Countries

Professor Neena Gupta, a mathematician at the Indian Statistical Institute in Kolkata, has been awarded the 2021 DST-ICTP-IMU Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians from developing countries for her outstanding work in affine algebraic geometry and commutative algebra.

4. Sunil Arora joins advisory body of IDEA (Dec. 8, 2021)

- Former Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora has been appointed to the advisory council of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).
- He was the 23rd Chief Election commissioner of India from 2nd December 2018 to 12th April, 2021.
- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance is based in Stockholm, Sweden.
- It is an intergovernmental organisation of 34 member countries.