



## Castes count

**Context:** It is true that there is a social and legal necessity for compiling caste-wise data. The Supreme Court has been asking the States to produce quantifiable data to justify their levels of reservation, and it would help Tamil Nadu to retain its 69% total reservation.

### The exclusive reservation as a tool of advancement

1. At the same time, some castes that have either electoral or numerical importance across India have been restive about the manner in which affirmative action programmes based on classes and communities have been implemented so far.
2. Be it the Gujjars, or Jats or the Patidars, or the Vanniyars, some sections have been linking their prospects of advancement to the exclusive reservation.
3. In Tamil Nadu, sections of the Vanniyars, whose violent 1987-88 agitation resulted in the creation of a 'most backward classes' category entitled to 20% reservation, are apparently dissatisfied about being clubbed with over a hundred other castes.
4. It is a sobering reflection on how reservation operates that some castes feel crowded out in the competition and aspire for the safety of exclusive reservation.

### The Challenge

1. It will be a huge challenge to arrive at a sound assessment of the social and educational backwardness of each caste. The Census of India has not collected caste-wise data since 1931, with the exception of details about SCs and STs.
2. The Centre conducted a 'socio-economic caste census' in 2011, in an attempt to link the collection of caste data along with socio-economic data so that there could be a comprehensive assessment of levels of deprivation and backwardness in society.
3. However, presumably because of the lack of reliability of the data collected, or its political and electoral sensitivity, the caste portion of the SECC has not been disclosed so far.

### Conclusion:

Caste wise data of social and educational backwardness can be used to rationalise and deepen its social justice policy with a true assessment of the backwardness



and deprivation of various castes. After all, progress towards a casteless and equal society ought to remain the state's ultimate goal.

**Mains:**

Discuss the utility of socio-economic caste census in targeting the beneficiaries across welfare schemes of the country. Explain that reservation alone is not sufficient for socio-economic advancement. What are the other factors which will help India to achieve socio-economic advancement of all sections of society?

## Choppy tidings

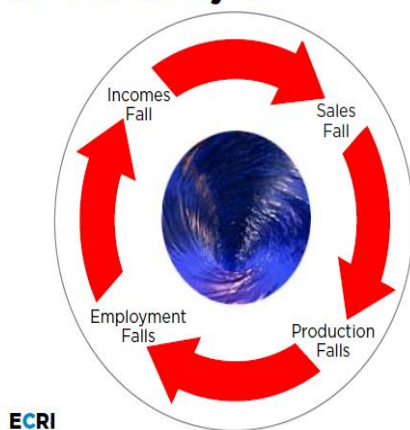
**Bottom line:** While the November GST collection highlights economic revival, the govt. must do more for sectors that are employment-intensive before the next Budget.

**The government needs to stop Job losses which lead to Demand Slump**

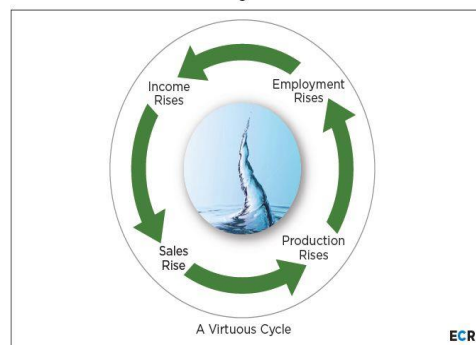
Economic activity that has resumed remains fragile while the recovery seen so far has been uneven across States, thanks to the virus's unpredictable spread. The government has been conservative so far in its stimulus and support measures, despite which its fiscal math for 2020-21 will go awry. More direct and specific measures to help employment-intensive sectors, particularly those in distress such as travel and tourism or retail, are needed to ensure that further job losses today do not translate into tomorrow's demand slump.

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**What is a Recovery?**





## A looming health crisis

**Crux:** Antimicrobial resistance is growing exponentially and needs to be tackled before it is late

### Slow developing Disaster

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is growing at an alarming rate. Globally, about 35% of common human infections have become resistant to available medicines. According to a study published in The Lancet, an estimated 58,000 new-born children die annually from sepsis in India alone because antibiotics can no longer treat certain bacterial infections.

### Reason for increasing AMR

We have long known that microorganisms develop resistance to antimicrobial agents as a natural defence mechanism. We have also known for some time that human activity has significantly accelerated the process.

1. The misuse and overuse of antimicrobials for humans, livestock and agriculture is probably the biggest reason for this, but other factors also contribute.
2. Research points to the role of environment and pollution in AMR. Once consumed, up to 80% of antibiotic drugs are excreted un-metabolised, along with resistant bacteria. Their release in effluents from households and health and pharmaceutical facilities, and agricultural run-off, is propagating resistant microorganisms.
3. Wastewater treatment facilities are unable to remove all antibiotics and resistant bacteria. In India, there is the capacity to treat only about 37% of the sewage generated annually. The rest is discharged into natural water bodies without treatment.
4. Water is a major mode for the spread of AMR, especially in places with inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene.
5. Wildlife that comes into contact with discharge containing antimicrobials can also become colonised with drug-resistant organisms.

### Key initiatives

1. UN agencies are working together to develop the One Health AMR Global Action Plan (GAP) that addresses the issue in the human, animal, and plant health and food and environment sectors.

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2. India's National Action Plan (NAP) for AMR was released in April 2017 itself.

### Way Forward:

The Centre and State governments in India can strengthen the environmental dimensions of their plans to tackle antimicrobial resistance. It is particularly important to promote measures that address known hotspots such as hospitals and manufacturing and waste treatment facilities.