



Current Affairs of the Day

GS Paper - II

- SC seeks States' views on 50% cap on quota
- 'Only half of govt. schools, anganwadis have tap water'



SC seeks States' views on 50% cap on quota

The Supreme Court on Monday decided to examine whether its nearly three-decade-old judgment fixed reservation for the marginalised and the poor in government jobs and educational institutions at 50% needs a relook.

Highlights:

1. In 1992, a nine-judge Bench of the court had drawn the “Lakshman Rekha” for reservation in jobs and education at 50%, except in “extraordinary circumstances”.
2. However, over the years, several States, such as Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, have crossed the Rubicon and passed laws that allow reservation shooting over 60%.

Maratha quota law

1. A five-judge bench, led by Justice Ashok Bhushan, set up to hear the challenge to the Maratha quota law, decided not to confine the question of reservation spilling over the 50% limit to just Maharashtra.
2. The Bench expanded the ambit of the case by making other States party and inviting them to make their stand clear on the question of whether the reservation should continue to remain within the 50% boundary or not.
3. Justice Bhushan, leading the Constitution Bench, decided to start the hearing on March 15, giving time for the other States to prepare their arguments.
4. The court, meanwhile, framed a series of questions, which include whether the Indira Sawhney verdict of 1992, fixing the 50% limit on quota, needs to be relooked by a larger Bench of more than nine judges.

Extraordinary Circumstances

question is whether the Maharashtra State Reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) Act of 2018, which provides 12% to 13% quota benefits for the Maratha community, thus taking the reservation percentage in the State across the 50% mark, was enacted under “extraordinary circumstances”.



The Indira Sawhney judgment had categorically said “50% shall be the rule, and only in certain exceptional and extraordinary situations for bringing far-flung and remote areas' populations into the mainstream the said 50% rule can be relaxed”.

‘Only half of govt. schools, anganwadis have tap water’

Only half of the government schools and anganwadis have tap water supply, despite a 100-day campaign for 100% coverage being launched by the Jal Shakti Ministry in October 2020, according to information provided to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Water Resources.

Highlights:

1. Less than 8% of schools in Uttar Pradesh and 11% in West Bengal have it, while it is available in only 2-6% of anganwadis in Assam, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Bengal.
2. At a time when schools and anganwadis are just starting to reopen after a year-long shutdown, COVID-19 safety protocols require repeated handwashing by students and teachers. In its report on the demand for grants submitted to the Lok Sabha on Monday, the Standing Committee urged the Ministry to take up the matter with laggard States.
3. The campaign to provide potable piped water supply for drinking and cooking purposes and tap water for washing hands and in toilets in every school, Anganwadi and ashramshala or residential tribal school was launched on October 2, Gandhi Jayanti.
4. The 100-day period should have ended on January 10, 2021. However, as of February 15, only 48.5% of anganwadis and 53.3% of schools had a tap water supply, the Ministry told the Parliamentary panel.
5. Seven States — Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Punjab — achieved 100% coverage.
6. The panel noted that “children are more susceptible to water-borne diseases, more so when there is also a need for repeated washing of hands as a precautionary measure during the pandemic”.