



Current Affairs of the Day

Debate on OBC Bill shows the new avatar of Mandal politics

The 50% cap on reservations

1. The debate on the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Seventh Amendment) Bill, 2021 in both Houses of Parliament during the monsoon session saw growing demands by political parties across the board, including National Democratic Alliance (NDA) allies, that a caste-based census is undertaken.
2. Such an exercise, revealing the true extent of the Other Backward Classes (OBC) population, will lead to raising the 50% cap on reservations currently in place.
3. The two demands made with more strength than before are significant in the way they point to the fulcrum around which Mandal politics, in its third avatar, is likely to revolve.
4. Regional parties, especially those that came up following the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations in the 1990s, are at the forefront of these demands.
5. The Union government under Mr Modi, however, has not revealed the findings of the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) done in 2011, and the Justice G. Rohini Commission set up to look into sub-categorisation of OBCs for reservations in jobs and educational institutions are yet to submit its report.

Delicate situation

1. The forces of social and political mobility unleashed by the Mandal Commission recommendations are unfurling in each decade in a different way.
2. For political parties, especially the BJP, it may be time to draft plans to re-engineer their social engineering formula, this time to accommodate the third coming of Mandal politics.

Parliament passes Bill on OBC lists

1. Parliament passed a constitutional amendment aimed at restoring the rights of the States and the Union Territories to maintain their own list of Socially and



Economically Backward Classes (SEBCs), commonly known as Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

2. The Supreme Court held that the Maratha reservation granted by the Maharashtra government was unconstitutional and that the President alone was empowered to identify SEBCs.

Taliban could take over Kabul in 90 days: U.S. intelligence

1. The Taliban could isolate Afghanistan's capital Kabul in 30 days and potentially take it over in 90 days, a U.S. defence official told, citing a U.S. intelligence assessment.
2. Taliban militants have taken control of eight provincial capitals in six days, a pace that has surprised U.S. officials.
3. Taliban now control 65% of Afghanistan and have taken or threaten to take 11 provincial capitals, a senior EU official said.

Biden to host democracy summit in Dec.

1. In line with his campaign message on foreign policy, U.S. President Joe Biden will host a 'Summit for Democracy', virtually, on December 9-10, around three themes: defending against authoritarianism, fighting corruption, and promoting respect for human rights.
2. The summit will gather together heads of state, civil society, philanthropy, and the private sector, the White House announced.
3. A second summit, this time in-person, will follow about a year later, the White House said.
4. On foreign policy, the statement said Mr Biden had rebuilt America's alliances with other democracies, "rallying the world to stand up against human rights abuses, to address the climate crisis, and to fight the global pandemic, including by donating hundreds of millions of vaccine doses."
5. The Summit is seen as one way to counter growing Chinese influence.



Govt. to completely exit erstwhile PSUs

1. The government is eyeing a sale of its residual stakes in erstwhile public sector firms like Paradeep Phosphates, Hindustan Zinc and Balco, which were privatised during the Atal Behari Vajpayee regime.
2. The government still owns a 49% stake in aluminium producer Balco and 29.5% in Hindustan Zinc, with the latter's sale held up since 2016 following a Supreme Court stay.
3. With both the firms staying highly profitable after the transfer of management control to a private player, these stakes could yield a significant bonanza for the exchequer.
4. Expressions of interest were expected to be invited soon for the sale of Container Corporation of India (CONCOR), once the government framed a land lease policy for the firm's holdings. The IDBI Bank sale process had also begun
5. The Government intend to complete the privatisation of Air India, BPCL, Shipping Corporation of India, BEML, Pawan Hans and Nilanchal Ispat Nigam Limited.
6. These are the transactions where we have got sufficient interest from bidders and are now completing the second stage of the due diligence and financial bidding.
7. On asset monetisation, the Secretary said GAIL was likely to come up with an offering soon through the Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) structure, though there were still some pending structural issues that needed to be smoothed as per the learnings of the maiden InvIT from PowerGrid Corporation. More airports would also be offered as public-private partnership ventures.

Centre to soon free up untapped space in SEZs

1. The government will soon free up unused built-up area worth about ₹30,000 crore and idle land inside Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for other economic activity.



2. The move to free up unutilised land parcels is likely to be operationalised by the end of August, as part of a simpler regulatory regime that the government is ringing in for SEZs, which account for about 30% of India's exports.
3. The government will remit about ₹50,000 crores of pending export benefits over a two-year period and notify the RoDTEP scheme rates awaited by exporters.
4. Exporters have been complaining about their inability to price orders effectively in the absence of the notification of rates under the RoDTEP (Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Products) scheme.