

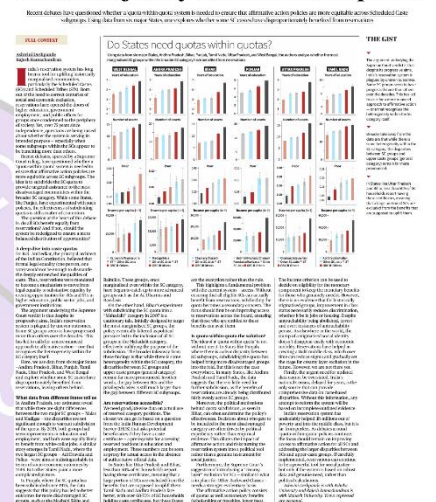
5th Nov, 2024

1. Does Data Justify Subdivision of Quotas? GS 2 (Governance)

• Why in News:

- India's reservation system has been instrumental in providing access to opportunities for historically marginalized communities, especially **Scheduled Castes (SCs)** and **Scheduled Tribes (STs)**.
- However, recent debates question whether the benefits of this system are equitably distributed among all SC subgroups.
- The Supreme Court has proposed introducing a **"quota-within-quota"** to address these disparities, leading to a nationwide discussion on whether such measures are justified by data.

Does data justify subdivision of quotas?



• Foundation & Evolution of Reservation in India:

- The reservation policy, rooted in **B.R. Ambedkar's vision**, aimed to create equal opportunities by reserving spots in education, public employment, and governance for marginalized communities.
- While the intention was to dismantle caste-based inequalities, the outcomes have been uneven, with some SC subgroups reportedly benefiting more than others.
- As a result, there are **growing calls to redesign the reservation system** to ensure a balanced distribution of opportunities.

• Disparities Among SC Subgroups:

- Using data from states like Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal, researchers have found significant disparities in the outcomes of reservation policies:
 - Punjab:** Since 1975, Punjab has implemented a subdivided quota system, benefiting disadvantaged SC subgroups like the Mazhabi Sikhs and Balmikis, helping them catch up to more advanced subgroups.
 - Bihar:** The state created a **"Mahadalit"** category in 2007 to target marginalized SC groups. However, political pressures expanded the category to include all SC groups, diluting its effectiveness.
 - Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu:** These states have relatively balanced outcomes between their major SC groups, indicating that a further subdivision of quotas may not be necessary.
 - Across these states, the data reveals that while disparities exist within the SC category, the gap between SCs and upper-caste groups is still much larger.
 - This suggests that while a quota subdivision may help address some disparities within the SC category, it may not be a complete solution.

• Access to Reserved Opportunities:

- A fundamental challenge in India's reservation system is ensuring access to reserved benefits.
- Data from the **India Human Development Survey (IHDS)** reveals that a significant portion of SC households in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar lack caste certificates—essential for accessing reserved positions in education and employment.
- This highlights a need to improve access to reservation benefits rather than focusing solely on quota subdivision.

• Potential Issues with Quota Subdivision:

- While the idea of a **"quota-within-quota"** has merit in states like Punjab, data suggests that it may not be necessary everywhere.
- In states where SC groups have comparable socio-economic outcomes, further subdivisions could complicate the reservation system without delivering substantial benefits.

- Additionally, the subdivision policy is often vulnerable to political motivations, as seen in Bihar, where expanding the “Mahadalit” category diluted its impact.
- The Supreme Court’s recommendation to introduce a “creamy layer” exclusion for SCs is another contentious proposal.
- While excluding economically advantaged SC individuals from reservation benefits could theoretically enhance equity, experts caution that economic mobility may not necessarily reduce caste-based discrimination.
- Instances of both overt and covert untouchability persist, suggesting that social identity, rather than economic status, continues to influence discrimination.
- **Need for Updated Data:**
 - **India’s national Census**, currently delayed, is the most comprehensive source of data on caste-based disparities.
 - Updated data is crucial to ensure that reservation policies are based on current socio-economic realities rather than outdated information.
 - Without reliable data, any attempt to reform the reservation system may be misguided.
- **Conclusion:**
 - India’s reservation system has uplifted many marginalized groups, yet it faces challenges in delivering equitable outcomes within the SC category.
 - A quota-within-quota system may benefit states with pronounced disparities, but it is not a universal solution.
 - Improving access to reservation benefits and addressing caste-based discrimination across the board should be prioritized.
 - Moving forward, **reservation policies should be informed by robust, updated data to ensure they serve as genuine tools for social justice.**

2. Debate Surrounding Village Relocation for Tiger Reserves GS 3 (Environment)

- **Why in News:**
 - The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has intervened in the debate surrounding village relocations from tiger reserves.
 - The commission responded to complaints against the National Tiger Conservation Authority’s (NTCA) June advisory requesting state forest departments to submit action plans for village relocations.
- **Legal and Procedural Requirements for Relocation:**
 - **Families living inside tiger habitat:**
 - As per NTCA, 591 villages comprising 64,801 families live inside critical tiger habitats, also known as core areas, in 54 tiger reserves across 19 states.
 - So far, 251 villages with 25,007 families have been relocated outside tiger reserves.
 - **Legal requirements:**
 - **Under the Wildlife Protection Act**, areas free of human settlements can be created in the core of tiger reserves.
 - However, this is to be done after recognising the rights of tribal communities under **the Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006**, and with the informed **consent of the Gram Sabha**
 - **Procedural requirements (Voluntary Village Relocation Program [VVRP] of the NTCA):**
 - Additionally, before the voluntary relocation,
 - **The state government has to conclude** (based on consultations with ecological and social scientists),

ST Commission to seek report from NTCA on villages’ relocation from tiger reserves

NIKHIL GHANAEKAR
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 4

THE NATIONAL Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has taken cognisance of representations sent to it against a June advisory of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), asking state forest departments to submit action plans on the relocation of villages from tiger reserves. The NCST, a constitutional body, held a full commission meeting on the issue on September 24 with chairperson Antur Singh Arya and its three members in attendance. The commission decided to seek a report from NTCA on the relocation issue, highly placed sources in the commission confirmed to The Indian Express. The September meeting’s decision was ratified in the last week of October. Further, the commission also decided to seek an action-taken report from the Union Environment Ministry and NTCA on its 2018 recommendations to revise the compensation package offered to villagers voluntarily opting to move out of tiger reserves. The NCST had said in October 2018 that the compensation package should be provided based on the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013. It added that the compensation package should include the monetary package along with the full range of entitlements as provided under the 2013 Act. The NTCA had revised the compensation in 2021 from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 15 lakh per family. The commission, sources said, wants to know the action taken by NTCA on its 2018 recommendations and the relocations carried out thereon. The Indian Express had reported in June that NTCA had written to state forest departments asking them to take up village relocation on a priority basis and frame a timeline for the smooth relocation of villages from core areas of tiger reserves. As per NTCA’s letter, 591 villages comprising 64,801 families live inside critical tiger habitats, also known as core areas, in 54 tiger reserves across 19 states. So far, 251 villages with 25,007 families have been relocated outside tiger reserves. Later, in September, a collective of over 150 tribal rights groups and individuals wrote to the NCST. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change seeking a rollback of NTCA’s letter. The representation stated that the NTCA’s letter was in violation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, and the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2006, as it sought time-bound village relocation plans for a process that is voluntary, as per law. Under the Wildlife Protection Act, areas free of human settlements can be created in the core of tiger reserves. However, this is to be done after recognising the rights of tribal communities under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, and with the informed consent of the Gram Sabha concerned. Additionally, the state government has to conclude that activities of the tribal communities or forest dwellers or their presence are sufficient to cause irreversible damage to tigers and their habitat. They have to also conclude that there is no other reasonable option for the community to co-exist with tigers.

- That the activities of the tribal communities or forest dwellers or their presence are sufficient to **cause irreversible damage to tigers and their habitat.**
- They have to also conclude that there is **no other reasonable option** for the community to co-exist with tigers.
- **Compensation:**
 - The NTCA had raised the **relocation compensation** for families opting for voluntary relocation **from ₹10 lakh to ₹15 lakh per family in 2021.**
 - Those accepting the resettlement package receive two hectares of land, homestead land, house construction assistance, a financial incentive, and basic amenities, including water, sanitation, electricity, and telecommunication.
- **Debate Surrounding Village Relocations from Tiger Reserves:**
 - **Opposition to NTCA's advisory:**
 - NTCA advised state forest departments to **prioritise the relocation of villages from core tiger habitats across 54 tiger reserves.**
 - However, this advisory prompted pushback from over 150 tribal rights groups and activists.
 - The petition to NCST pointed out that the NTCA letter did not dwell on the legal and procedural requirements, making it violative of laws.
 - They argued that NTCA's approach violates FRA and the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act 2006, as **village relocation should be voluntary.**
 - **NCST take on NTCA advisory:**
 - **NCST requested an update** from NTCA on village relocations and their adherence to NCST's prior recommendations.
 - **The commission also seeks an action-taken report** from the Union Environment Ministry and NTCA on its 2018 recommendations to revise the compensation for villagers who voluntarily relocate from tiger reserves.
 - The NCST wants to ensure this package aligns with the **2013 Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act's** guidelines and entitlements.
- **Conclusion:**
 - NCST's intervention underscores the **need to balance tiger conservation with tribal rights**, ensuring that relocation policies comply with legal requirements.
 - By engaging with NTCA, the Environment Ministry, and tribal representatives, NCST aims to **create a fair relocation framework** that respects both conservation goals and tribal communities' rights.

3. Ningol Chakkouba Festival GS 1 (Art and Culture)

- **Why in News:** Recently, Ningol Chakkouba festival was held with religious fervour and gaiety across the State of Manipur.
- **About Ningol Chakkouba Festival:**
 - The festival is held every year on the second day of the **lunar month of Hiyangei** of the Meitei calendar.
 - The festival is **mainly celebrated by the Meiteis** but nowadays many other communities also have started to celebrate it as it emphasises the importance of happiness and the reunion of a family in bringing peace and harmony in a society.
 - Ningol means '**married woman**' and Chakouba means '**invitation for feast**'; so, the festival is the one where the married women are invited to their parent's home for a feast.
 - The main component of the festival is the **visit of married sisters to their maternal homes** for a grand feast and joyous reunion followed by the giving away the gifts.
 - It is customary for the son of the family to extend a formal invitation to his sister for Ningol Chakkouba a week in advance of the gathering. The festival is held today outside Manipur where Manipuris are settled.
- **Key facts about the Meitei Community**
 - They are the predominant ethnic group of **Manipur State.**

- **Language:** They speak the **Meitei language**(officially called Manipuri), one of the 22 official languages of India and the sole official language of Manipur State.
- **Distribution:**
 - The Meiteis primarily settled in the Imphal Valley region in modern-day Manipur, though a sizable population has settled in the other Indian states of **Assam, Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram**.
 - There is also a notable presence of Meitei in the neighbouring countries of Myanmar and Bangladesh.
- **Clans:** They are divided into clans, the members of which do not intermarry.
- **Economy:** Rice cultivation on irrigated fields is the basis of their economy.

4. Election Day in US GS 2 (International Relations)

Why in News:

- The US Presidential Election is set to commence on November 5, with a thrilling race anticipated between Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump.

- The decisive outcome hinges on the Electoral College, especially in seven key "swing states" where the race remains extremely tight, making the final result uncertain.

U.S. Presidential Election

Overview

- The U.S. presidential election is held every **four years** to elect the President and Vice President of the United States.
- **It follows an indirect voting process**, where citizens vote for a slate of electors who then choose the President and Vice President.

Constitutional requirements for presidential candidates

- The U.S. Constitution states that the president must:
 - Be a natural-born citizen of the United States
 - Be at least 35 years old
 - Have been a resident of the United States for 14 years

Primary Elections and Caucuses

- Primaries and caucuses are two ways that people help states and political parties choose presidential nominees.
- These take place in each state and run from early in the election year until the summer.
- During this stage, party members vote for their preferred candidates, and delegates are assigned to represent these choices at the national conventions.

National Conventions

- Following the primaries, each party holds a national convention where delegates officially nominate the party's candidates for President and Vice President.
- The nominees then accept the party's nomination, and the general election campaign begins.

The General Election

- The general election occurs on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

Why US elections are 'called' by the media, how this is done

ARUN SENGUPTA

10/11/2020, 10:10:00 AM

THE US is a long-standing tradition of news organisations "calling" elections in the United States. Beyond reporting local and state-level results, TV channels and news agencies make definitive calls about the results — much before they are final.

This tradition began with the Associated Press, the oldest news organisation calling election results in the US. It was followed by AP, Reuters, and the Associated Press.

Decentralised elections

The US will effectively hold 51 distinct elections in 2020 — one every state and one in the District of Columbia — each with its own set of rules and regulations, voting

mechanisms, and scope of election workers. Unlike in India which has the Election Commission, there is no federal body to coordinate results and provide a national picture. This is because elections in the US are highly decentralised. Although there is a federal Electoral College, it is only a body to elect the President and Vice President. The EC does not decide on the results of individual states and counties. This is left up to the states, and many cases, even individual counties.

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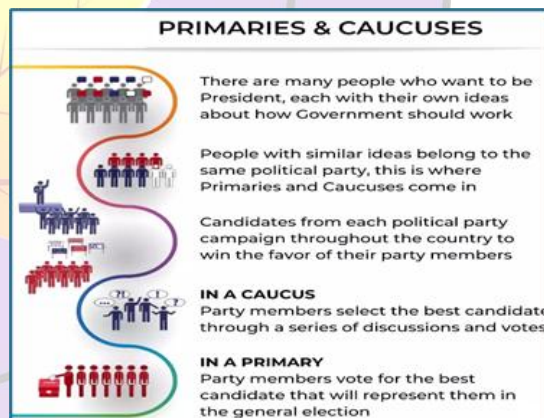
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- Voters in each state cast their ballots for President, effectively choosing electors who will represent their state in the Electoral College.
- **Electoral College Voting and Inauguration**
 - In December, the electors meet in their respective state capitals to cast their official votes.
 - These votes are counted by Congress in early January, and the President-elect is formally declared.
 - The elected President is then inaugurated on January 20, marking the official start of their term in office.
- **Electoral College Mechanism in US**
 - **Electoral College System**
 - **Americans don't directly vote for the President;** instead, they vote for electors who form the Electoral College.
 - There are 538 electors, and a candidate needs 270 to win the presidency.
 - **Allocation of Electors**
 - Each state has a designated number of electors, roughly based on its population.
 - By voting for a candidate, voters are actually choosing that candidate's party-designated electors for their state.
 - **Winner-Takes-All Rule**
 - Most states use a winner-takes-all system (except Maine and Nebraska), where the candidate who wins the popular vote in a state receives all its electoral votes.
 - This system often makes the outcome in solidly Democratic or Republican states predictable.
 - **Importance of Swing States**
 - Due to this system, close races in a few "swing states" hold significant influence over the election, as the overall outcome depends on who reaches the 270 electoral vote threshold first.
 - **Duties and voting by electors:**
 - Electors meet in December to formally vote for the President and Vice President.
 - While electors traditionally vote in line with their party's candidate, there is **no federal law binding them to do so.**
 - However, **many states have laws** enforcing elector loyalty, and faithless electors are rare, as seen in the 2016 election.
- **Role of Swing States**
 - **Role**
 - Some states, known as "swing states" or "battleground states," have historically close races and can vote either Democratic or Republican.
 - These states play a pivotal role, as the winner-takes-all system makes their outcome critical to securing the required 270 electoral votes.
 - **Swing states in this year's election**
 - Seven key swing states—Pennsylvania, Georgia, North Carolina, Michigan, Arizona, Wisconsin, and Nevada—are critical in the current U.S. presidential election.
 - Together, these states hold 93 Electoral College votes and are being heavily targeted by both Kamala Harris and Donald Trump's campaigns.

5. Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki GS 3 (Environment)

- **Why in News:** Recently, at least 10 people died after Mount Lewotobi Laki-laki in eastern Indonesia erupted and forced authorities to evacuate several nearby villages.
- **About Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki:**
 - It is located on **Flores Island**.
 - It is a **volcanic mountain** situated in East Nusa Tenggara province of

- The volcano is part of a **twin-volcano system** that the local residents perceive as male and female mountains.
- The ongoing volcanic eruption has occurred at the male counterpart of the system (Lewotobi Lakilaki) while the female mountain is known as Lewotobi Perempuan.
- The two mountains are **classified as stratovolcanoes** which are the most commonly occurring volcanoes around the world and are formed by the layers of lava that repeatedly oozes out of the crater.
- It is not uncommon for Indonesia to witness such volcanic eruptions as it is situated along the famous **'Ring of Fire' in the Pacific region**- an encirclement dotted by active volcanoes that sit on top of vigorous tectonic plates that often collide and lead to seismic activity causing earthquakes and tsunamis.
- **What are Stratovolcanoes?**
 - It is a **tall, steep, and cone-shaped type** of volcano.
 - Unlike flat shield volcanoes, they have higher peaks.
 - They are typically **found above subduction zones**, and they are often part of large volcanically active regions, such as the **Ring of Fire that frames much of the Pacific Ocean**.
 - Strato Volcanoes **comprise the largest percentage**(~60%) of the Earth's individual volcanoes, and most are characterized by eruptions of andesite and dacite, lavas that are cooler and more viscous than basalt.

6. Orphan drugs GS 2 (Health)

- **Why in News:** India faces significant challenges in ensuring the development, affordability, and accessibility of orphan drugs, especially compared to other countries like the United States and the European Union.
- **About Orphan drugs:**
 - These are pharmaceutical agents developed specifically to **treat rare (orphan) diseases**.
 - These diseases, though affecting only a small portion of the population, often lead to life-threatening or chronically debilitating conditions. Definitions of orphan drugs vary depending on the regulatory framework.
 - There is **no formal prevalence-based definition in India**, the NPRD of 2021 outlines a framework for diagnosing and treating rare diseases, with a low prevalence threshold expected.
 - Orphan drugs are categorised based on the types of diseases they target and their regulatory status.
 - Diseases such as **genetic disorders, rare cancers, metabolic disorders, and autoimmune conditions** frequently fall under the orphan disease category.
 - **Genetic disorders** include conditions like cystic fibrosis and Duchenne muscular dystrophy.
 - **Rare cancers** like neuroblastoma and gliomas also qualify for orphan drug development.
 - **Metabolic disorders**, such as Gaucher's disease and Fabry disease, and autoimmune diseases, like systemic sclerosis, also benefit from orphan drugs.
 - For a drug to receive orphan drug designation, it must **meet certain criteria** that vary across countries.
 - Typically, the disease in question **must have a low prevalence**, the condition must **lack approved treatments**, or the orphan drug must provide significant benefits over current treatment options.
 - Developers of orphan drugs must also provide scientific evidence that the drug has the potential to treat or alleviate the condition.
 - This evidence can be presented at any stage of drug development, from preclinical research to late-phase clinical trials.
 - Once designated, orphan drugs receive **several incentives to encourage their development**, including market exclusivity, tax credits for research and development (R&D) expenses and fee waivers for regulatory applications.