

**POLITY AND GOVERNANCE**

**Context: The politics of a caste census, its impact on secularism**

Since Narendra Modi entered India's national political scene, opposition party leaders of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) have failed to advance their agendas, but they have succeeded in setting the agenda for this one issue at least through their consistent support of the caste census.

**Poverty as an Agenda:**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has monopolised agenda-setting in Indian politics, from demonetisation to the notion of simultaneous elections. Mr. Modi has maintained that his primary concern is assisting the poor and that he only believes in poverty as the only caste in response to the INDIA coalition's constant demands for a caste census.
- Researchers that study poverty in India assert that there are two types of poverty: institutional and economic. Caste has historically determined vocation and skill set; hence it is a major factor in the continuation of institutional poverty.
- A caste census is essential because, in the modern Indian economy, the majority of jobs are network driven, and caste plays a crucial role in driving those networks. This is also the reason it makes sense for Rahul Gandhi to say that a census of this kind "is like the X-ray of India."
- Mr. Modi is ignoring a very unpleasant aspect of Indian society by refusing to acknowledge that caste has created poverty. Not only does Mr. Modi fail to acknowledge this, but the Nehru-Mahalanobis model of development's trickle-down approach failed to do so as well. As a result, Indian policy thought has long ignored the truth that caste and poverty are inextricably linked.

**Justifying the right's hesitancy**

- Nonetheless, Hindutva's reluctance to conduct a caste census appears to stem from their concern that it could unleash a barrage of accusations and denials on authority and status, including who is entitled to what, when, and how.
- A census of this kind would provide a constant source of political division and kick off an unending chain of social engineering, upending Hindutva's meticulously constructed Hindu majoritarian unity, which has been built over decades of intense grassroots activism.
- Hindutva forces are very close to realising their political goal of Hindu majoritarian unity, which seemed nearly utopian in the middle of the 1970s, by utilising the politics of religious polarisation.

**Explaining the right's reluctance**

- However, nonreligious political organisations are also conscious of the polarising effects that a caste census could have. To them, it is the most effective tool available to limit the increasing electoral power of Hindu majoritarian parties.
- There isn't much hope for secular politics to come back because of the caste census. From the perspective of secularism's resurgence in India, it is a risk. While it may have the tempo of Hindutva politics, it is not the final result that may lead to the creation of a majoritarian Hindu political culture or a state akin to it.
- The last caste census was conducted in 1931, when organised right parties were just minor participants in India's freedom struggle. 1951 might have seen the continuation of the caste census after independence. It is conceivable that the right may have been a major factor in the 1951 caste census not being resumed.
- It wouldn't be out of the question to suggest that there may be some similarities between the reasons why the Indian Constitution did not include the word "secular" despite some effort and the reasons why the caste census was not recommenced in 1951.

**Conclusion:**

It's possible that embedded right groups contributed to the coordinated opposition to India's secular project at the time. The modern resistance is more structured and louder than ever before, but it merely restates the same old arguments.

**INTERNAL SECURITY**

**Context: Need for a National Crisis Management Response Framework**

**Why in News?**

The Director of India's National Security Guard has emphasised the significance of developing a crisis management response framework for extreme terrorist scenarios in the wake of the recent assault in Israel.

**What is the Need for a National Crisis Management Response Framework?**

- **Preparedness for Unpredictable Threats:**
  - Extreme terrorist events can come as a surprise, therefore having a clear plan of action is essential.
  - Authorities are guaranteed to be prepared to face unforeseen security challenges by means of a crisis management framework.
  - Coordination among various agencies, both at the federal and state levels, is crucial in countering terrorism effectively.
  - The framework will establish clear protocols for collaboration and communication during crises.
- **Mitigating Impact:**
- Terrorist acts can be considerably lowered in their impact, resulting in fewer casualties and less damage, with prompt and well-coordinated reactions.
- Guidelines for mitigating strategies are provided by an organised crisis management framework.
- **Safeguarding Critical Infrastructure:**
- Critical infrastructure is regularly the target of terrorist attacks, jeopardising national security.
- This framework will be an essential part of the country's security infrastructure, guaranteeing resilience against changing threats.
- It should include measures to protect critical infrastructure during a crisis, ultimately enhancing national security by comprehensively addressing extreme terrorist scenarios.
- **Enhancing Counter terrorism Capabilities:**
  - For those working in counterterrorism, the framework promotes ongoing training and skill development.
  - Constant investment in skills and capacities guarantees that responders stay at the forefront of their profession.
  - The synergy between highly skilled persons and innovative technology should be acknowledged in the framework. Nevertheless, despite advances in technology, the combination of people and weapons is ultimately what determines the outcome.
- **Border Security Challenges:**
  - India's large territory and advantageous location in Southern Asia raise serious security issues.
  - Strong marine security measures are required due to India's 7,683 km of coastline and its expansive Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
  - Additionally, with over 15,000 km of shared land borders with seven other countries, particularly difficult borders with China and Pakistan, efficient border control is essential.
  - Difficult terrain and porous borders increase security difficulty. Concerns encompass militant infiltration and exhilaration, cross-border terrorism, and the emergence of non-state actors.
  - Difficulties listed above highlight the requirement for an all-encompassing national crisis management structure.
- **What is the National Security Guard?**
  - The National Security Guard (NSG) is a Federal Contingency World Class Zero Error Force that handles counterterrorism efforts in all their forms.
  - NSG should only be called upon in dire circumstances to prevent catastrophic acts of terrorism since it is a force that has been specially educated and equipped to handle particular conditions.
  - The National Security Guard Act, 1986, an act of Parliament, gave the NSG official legal status in 1986..
- **Vision:**
  - A World Class Zero Error Force.
- **Mission:**
  - "Train, equip, and maintain in readiness a special force capable of swiftly and effectively combating terrorism to uphold its motto of '**Sarvatra Sarvottam Suraksha**'.
- **FUNCTION**
  - The NSG functions as a task-oriented force under the Ministry of Home Affairs. It consists of two complimentary elements: the Special Action Group (SAG), which is the major offensive or striking wing of the NSG and is composed of Army personnel; and

- Special Ranger Groups (SRG), which are made up of members of state and central armed police forces. Usually, they take care of VIP security.
- The Minister of Home Affairs appoints and selects the Director General (DG), who serves as the head of the NSG.
- **Operations undertaken:**
  - **Operation Black Thunder** (Golden Temple, Amritsar, 1986 & 1988).
  - **Operation Ashwamedh** (Indian Airlines Flight-IC427 hijacking, India, 1993).
  - **Operation Thunderbolt or Vajra Shakti** (Akshardham Temple attack, Gujarat, 2002).
  - **Operation Black Tornado** (Mumbai Blasts, 2008).
  - **Operation Dhangu Suraksha**, (Pathankot, 2016).

### Conclusion

Crisis management is an essential mechanism to protect humanity and civilization .for extreme terrorist scenarios in the wake of the recent assault in Israel the The Director of India's National Security Guard has emphasised the significance of developing a National crisis management response framework.

## PRELIM FACTS

### 1. Puri Temple Ratna Bhandar

- **Context**
  - There is the demand to open the **Ratna Bhandar (treasure room)** of the Puri **Jagannath Temple** that has not been unlocked for three decades.
- **About**
  - After the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), the custodian of the 12th-century temple, issued a demand for repair/conservation of the chamber, calls to open the Ratna Bhandar gained traction.
    - There are concerns that fissures in its walls could damage the valuable ornaments held there.
- **What is Puri temple Ratna Bhandar?**
  - The magnificent decorations of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, and Goddess Subhadra, presented over ages by devotees and former kings, are kept in the Ratna Bhandar of the 12th century temple.
  - It is housed within the temple and consists of two chambers:
    1. Outer chamber (Bahara Bhandar): It is opened on a regular basis to retrieve ornaments for the deities during the 'Suna Besha' (golden clothing), a vital rite during the 'Annual Rath Yatra', as well as at major festivals throughout the year
    2. Inner chamber, Bhitara Bhandar: It hasn't been open in 38 years.
  - It contained 12,831 bhari of gold ornaments set with precious stones and 22,153 bhari of silver utensils, among other things.
- **When was the Ratna Bhandar last opened?**
  - According to official sources, the last inventory was made between May 13 and July 23, 1978.
    - Though it was opened again on July 14, 1985, the inventory was not updated.
  - Permission of the Odisha government is required to open the treasure house.
- **Jagannath Temple**
  - The majority of the major temple sites are in the old Kalinga — present Puri District, which includes Bhubaneswar or ancient Tribhuvaneshvara, Puri, and Konark. It was constructed in the 10th century by Anantavarman of the Chodaganga dynasty. The deities within the shrine, on the other hand, are thought to be far older.
  - As a result, in 1230, King Anangabhima III consecrated his realm to the deity and declared himself the god's "deputy."
    - ❖ All conquerors of Orissa, including the Mughals, Marathas, and the English East India Company, strove to seize control of the temple. They believed that doing so would make their rule acceptable to the locals.
- **The Architectural Features**
  - These are divided into three orders: Rekha Deula, Pidha Deula, and Khakhara Deula.
  - Odisha temples are a separate substyle within the Nagara Order.
  - The shikhara, Deul: It is practically vertical until the top, when it abruptly turns sharply inwards.
  - Jagamohana (the mandapas): The nearly square hall

- The horseshoe shape has been used since the beginning of time, beginning with the huge windows of the chaitya-grihas.
- Compartments and niches are often square, temple exteriors are beautifully carved, while interiors are generally barren. Odisha temples usually have boundary walls.

## **2. Gyan Sahayak Scheme**

### ➤ **Context:**

**The Gyan Sahayak Scheme announced by the Gujarat government witnessed opposition from student groups, political parties (including the AAP and Congress) etc.**

- **Gyan Sahayak Scheme**
  - The plan intends to fill gaps in government schools by appointing teachers, also known as Gyan Sahayaks, on a contractual basis until the usual selection procedure is completed. The plan assures that education is not jeopardized.
  - The Gyan Sahayaks will be appointed in the interim until the vacant positions of teachers in government primary, secondary, and upper secondary schools are filled through normal appointments.
  - Gyan Sahayak Scheme is only for government and grant-in-aid schools, particularly Mission Schools of Excellence.
- **Eligibility Criteria**
  - To be a Gyan Sahayak in primary school, the candidate must have passed the Gujarat Examination Board's Teachers Eligibility Test (TET)-2. Candidates who passed TET-2 five years prior to the launch of the Gyan Sahayak Scheme are ineligible to apply.
  - A candidate for secondary and higher secondary Gyan Sahayak must pass the Teacher Aptitude Test (TAT).
  - Primary and secondary school teachers must be under the age of 40, while higher secondary school teachers must be under the age of 42.

## **3. Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought**

### ➤ **Context**

- **Iran's Mahsa Amini Awarded 'Sakharov Freedom Prize' of 2023**

### ➤ **About**

- Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have awarded Jina Mahsa Amini and the Woman, Life, Freedom Movement in Iran the 2023 'Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought'.
- The award ceremony is set to take place on December 13.

### ➤ **Mahsa Amini**

- She was a Kurdish-Iranian lady who died in police prison in Iran and was given the European Union's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought posthumously.
- Her death provoked widespread protests spearheaded by women in Iran. They have been protesting the hijab law and other discriminatory policies under the banner "Woman, Life, Freedom."

### ➤ **Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought:**

- The European Parliament bestows the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought each year.
- It was founded in 1988 to recognize individuals and organizations that fight for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- The prize is named after Soviet physicist and political activist Andrei Sakharov, and it is worth 50 000 Euros.
- Sakharov received the Nobel Peace Prize.
- Last year, the European Parliament bestowed the honor on Ukraine's heroic people, as represented by their President, elected leaders, and civil society.

## **4. Archaeologist discovers inscription announcing the death of King Kulashchakra Alupendra I at Someshwara (Karnataka)**

- The death of a king was declared in the first record of the Alupa Dynasty.
  - The inscription is important for understanding Tuluva history and culture.
- Alupa Dynasty were one of the longest reigning dynasties of Tulu Nadu (in Karnataka).
- Barkur was the royal family's capital city.
- The Alupas had relocated their capital from Udyavara to Barkur.

- Tulu has a strong oral literature legacy, including folk song genres such as paddana and traditional folk theater yakshagana.
- The Halmidi Inscription (Hassan, Karnataka) mentions about a grant recommended by King Pashupati of Alupa and the Chief Commander of Kadamba forces.
- **About Kulashekara Alupendra I**
  - He ruled Tulunadu between 1156 and 1215 A.D. In Mangaluru, he founded the new city of Kulashekara.
  - He established strict norms and procedures for temple administration, which are currently adhered to by all temples in this region.
  - He was the first ruler to grant Tulu language and culture royal favor. Inscriptions refer to Alupa emperor as "Lokantamanta," which means "famous in the universe" in Tulu.
  - During his reign, the Someshwara temple was built in honor of Soma and was embellished with Nava Durgas.
  - The Soma cult was started in the 11th century AD by one Soma Sharma of Gujarat and quickly spread throughout the kingdom.

**5. States must appoint District Officers under Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 (PoSH Act): Supreme Court**

- **Context: SC directions came on a petition by NGO 'Initiatives for Inclusion Foundation' and others in 2017 seeking directions for implementation of PoSH Act.**
- **Key SC directions**
  - Principal Secretaries of Ministry of Women and Child Development of every states/UTs to ensure appointment of District officer in every district within four weeks under Section 5 of PoSH Act.
    - Each appointed District Officers would constitute Local Complaints Committees to receive complaints from women employed in small establishments with less than 10 workers or cases in which the assailant is the employer himself (section 6 of Act).
    - Chairperson and every Member of Local Committee shall hold office for such period, not exceeding three years, from date of their appointment as may be specified by District Officer.
  - Identify a 'nodal person' within Department to oversee implementation of PoSH Act and coordinate with Centre.
  - Each State/UT Government is to submit a consolidated report of its compliance with the directions to Centre within eight weeks.
    - Centre to consolidate reports, identify/remedy lapses in compliance by State, before filing a consolidated affidavit of compliance within 12 weeks.
- **PoSH Act 2013**
  - It was enacted for making workplaces safer for women by preventing, prohibiting and redressing acts of sexual harassment against them in workplace.
  - It is based on Vishakha guidelines laid down by SC in 1997.

**ANSWER WRITING**

**Q. Caste system has been a unique feature of Indian Society. How will the Caste Census in India resolve the age-old crisis of caste atrocities and marginalization? Explain**

**Introduction**

For millennia, the caste system has shaped social, economic, and political systems in India, making it a distinctive and deeply embedded aspect of the country's culture. The adoption of a caste census can be crucial to better understanding and eliminating caste-based discrimination and marginalization, even if India has made great strides in this regard through legal and constitutional measures.

- **Importance of the Caste Censu**
  - **Data Gathering and Awareness:** More precise and current information about the makeup and distribution of India's various castes and groups will be available through a caste census. Policymakers may find this data useful in better understanding the socioeconomic situations and disadvantages that different caste groups confront.
  - **Targeted Welfare:** More focused social welfare initiatives may be made possible by accurate caste data. By doing this, past injustices and inequities may be addressed and benefits and resources could be directed towards the most marginalised and underprivileged populations.
  - **Affirmative Action:** Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) are protected under India's well-established system in terms of employment, education, and

political representation. By giving marginalised communities chances and representation, these policies seek to uplift them. This caste census can help to streamline and expedite the procedure.

- **Social and Political Representation:** In order to guarantee that disadvantaged people are fairly represented in a range of fields, such as politics, education, and the workforce, caste-based data can also be utilised. This could provide marginalised groups more clout and influence when it comes to making decisions.
- **Tracking Progress:** Over time, the reduction of caste-based disparities can be tracked using data from a caste census, which can be used as a baseline. It can assist in evaluating the effects of current constitutional clauses and laws, such as those pertaining to reservations in public employment and education, and in making necessary revisions.
- **Legal Framework and Accountability:** The legal framework against caste-based discrimination can be strengthened by accurate caste statistics. In order to make sure that those who commit acts of violence based on caste are held responsible, it can help monitor and enforce legislation like as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.
- **Taking Care of Intersectionality:** A caste census can highlight instances where people are discriminated against not only on the basis of their caste but also on the basis of their gender, religion, or other characteristics. Policymakers can use this data to develop initiatives to tackle various aspects of marginalisation.
- **Encouraging Marginalised populations:** By bringing attention to their socioeconomic circumstances and encouraging a sense of social and political identity, publicly accessible caste data can empower marginalised populations. Increased social cohesiveness and group action against discrimination may result from this understanding.
- **It is imperative to recognize, that a caste census by itself is insufficient to address the long-standing issue of caste marginalization for a number of reasons:**
  - The intricate nature of caste lies in its deeply ingrained social, economic, and cultural aspects within Indian society. Merely listing the classes does not solve the underlying structural problems and ingrained prejudices that support inequality and discrimination.
  - **Discrimination and identification:** Stigmatisation and discrimination are frequently linked to caste identification. Caste differences and tensions may be exacerbated by a caste census, which unintentionally serves to maintain and strengthen these identities.
  - **Implementation Difficulties:** It can be difficult to execute welfare and affirmative action programmes based on caste statistics. Effective governance, political will, and processes are necessary to guarantee that the intended recipients receive the benefits.
  - **Over-Reliance on Caste Data:** Caste data may be overemphasised at the expense of other significant marginalization-causing factors, such as gender, poverty, and geographic location. It is imperative to adopt a holistic approach that takes into account many aspects of disadvantage.
  - **Social Transformation:** A emphasis on social transformation, awareness, and education is necessary to effectively overcome caste-based marginalisation. Shifting ingrained beliefs and biases is a long term process that goes beyond Data collection

**Privacy Issues:** Gathering information about caste gives rise to privacy issues and the possibility of abuse. It's crucial to implement appropriate security and data protection procedures. This assumes more significance when one considers that the right to privacy is turning into a fundamental freedom in which people's will and concerns are paramount.

**Opposition and Reaction:** Some people may be opposed to a caste census because they fear stigmatisation or the potential political fallout. Additionally, among the population of upper castes in hierarchies, there may arise fears of growing vote-bank politics as a result of targeted welfare for numerically sound castes. This might further fracture and divide the people and encourage discrimination and caste-based alienation.

### **Conclusion**

A caste census in India can be a useful instrument in creating social justice and equality policies by illuminating the scope of caste-based injustices and discrimination. To fully solve the ingrained problems with the caste system, it must be combined with thorough legal enforcement, awareness campaigns, and socioeconomic empowerment. A caste census can be a good place to start, but long-term reform and a reduction in caste-based injustices and marginalisation in Indian society need consistent work.

**MCQS**

1. Consider the following statements:
  1. The Amazon river basin covers parts of Guyana, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Suriname, French Guiana, and Venezuela.
  2. The Amazon rainforest is bound by the Andes mountain to the east and Atlantic Ocean to the west. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?  
(a) **1 only** (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
2. With reference to Millet production India, consider the following statements:
  1. India is the largest producer of Millet in the world.
  2. Maharashtra is the largest Millet producing state in India.
  3. The Indian government had suggested to the United Nations to declare the year 2025 as the International Year of Millets.  
How many of the statements given above are correct?  
(a) **Only one** (b) Only two  
(c) All three (d) None
3. With reference to Minimum Support Price in India, consider the following statements:
  1. The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) approves MSPs for various crops in India.
  2. CACP recommends MSPs for 22 mandated crops and fair and remunerative price (FRP) for sugarcane.  
Which of the statements given above is/are Incorrect?  
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only  
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) **Neither 1 nor 2**
4. With reference to the Sustainable Agri Food Systems, consider the following statements:
  1. It encompasses a holistic approach to agricultural production, distribution, consumption, and waste management that is environmentally sound.
  2. Pokkali rice, Kuttanad below Sea Level Farming System of Kerala are the example of Sustainable Agri Food Systems
  3. The 16th Agricultural Science Congress (ASC) organized in Kerala in order to promote Sustainability in the Agri-Food System by Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI).  
How many of the above statements are not correct?  
(a) **Only one** (b) Only two  
(c) All three (d) None
5. Regarding the Chemical Weapons, consider the following statements:
  1. Munitions, devices and other equipment specifically designed to weaponize toxic chemicals also fall under the definition of chemical weapons.
  2. The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is a multilateral treaty banning chemical weapons and requiring their destruction within the stipulated time.
  3. India is yet to sign the Chemical Weapon Convention.  
How many of the statements given above are correct?  
(a) Only one (b) **Only two**  
(c) All three (d) None
6. The 'Uluru Statement from the Heart' is related to tribes of—  
(a) India (b) Indonesia  
(c) Brazil (d) **Australia**
7. Best Tourism Villages Initiative is by—  
a) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)  
**b) United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO)**  
c) NITI Aayog  
d) Union Ministry of Tourism
8. With reference to the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), consider the following statements:
  1. It is the first-ever effort in the country to frame a national framework for air quality management with a time-bound reduction target.
  2. It covers 182 non-attainment cities.
  3. Non-attainment cities are those that have fallen short of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).  
How many of the statements given above is/are correct?  
a) None (b) Only one  
**c) Only two** (d) All three
9. Regarding I2U2 initiative, consider the following countries:
  1. Israel
  2. Iraq
  3. Iran
  4. India
 How many of the following countries is/are the part of I2U2 initiative?  
a) Only one (b) **Only two**  
c) Only three (d) All four
10. Consider the following statement:
  1. The origin of the Census in India dates back to the colonial exercise of 1881.
  2. The first Socio-Economic and Caste Census was conducted in 1891.
  3. Census data is confidential under the Census Act of 1948.  
How many of the statements given above is/are correct?  
a) None (b) Only one  
**c) Only two** (d) All three