

Parliamentary Committee on Welfare of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) submitted its report to Eighteenth Lok Sabha

The report examined the issues with Creamy Layer (CL) status among OBCs and recommended raising the income limit for creamy layer.

About Creamy Layer

- The concept of creamy layer (**more socio-economically advanced members** among OBCs) arose out of the landmark **Indra Sawhney case in 1992**.
 - ⊕ In **Indira Sawhney case**, Supreme Court upheld the **27% OBC reservation** in civil posts **subject to exclusion of creamy layer**.
- Based on **Ram Nandan Prasad Committee**, constituted after judgement, creamy layer comprised **two categories** - people whose parents are/were in certain category of government services, and people earning above a threshold income.
 - ⊕ The threshold income was **increased to Rs. 8 lakh** in 2017.

Key Observations of Committee

- **Creamy Layer Criteria:** Uniform yardsticks are not being followed while applying income/wealth test to determine creamy layer status in certain states.
 - ⊕ **Recommendation:** States should follow uniform formula for determining creamy layer.
- **Review of Creamy Layer Limit:** Existing income limit of Rs. 8 lakh for determining creamy layer is low **depriving a large segment of the OBC population from reservation benefits**.
 - ⊕ **Recommendation:** Fix a substantially higher income limit after consulting with stakeholders.



Supreme Court asks police force in all states to adhere to prescribed norms while making arrest

Supreme Court cited its previous ruling in **Somnath Vs. State of Maharashtra (2023)**, reiterating that all law enforcement agencies must **adhere strictly to constitutional and statutory safeguards** while handling arrests and custodial procedures.

- In **Somnath case**, the Supreme Court restated the principles and directions given in **D K Basu v State of West Bengal case (1997)**.

Supreme Court Guidelines in D.K Basu Case

- **Proper Identification:** Officers carrying out an arrest must wear **clear identification and name tags** with their designation.
- **Mandatory Memo:** At the time of arrest, a memo must be prepared containing time and date of arrest, attested by **at least one witness** and counter signed by the **arrestee**.
- **Inform a Relative/Friend:** Inform one friend/relative about the arrest of the person as soon as practicable.
- **Inspection Memo:** On request, arrested person must be **examined at the time of arrest**, and any injuries must be recorded in an **Inspection Memo**.
- **Medical Examination:** Arrestee should be subjected to **medical examination every 48 hours** during his/her detention.
- **Right to Lawyer:** Arrestee may be permitted to meet his/her lawyer during interrogation.



Safeguards available to arrested persons

- **Constitutional:** **Article 22** protects the rights and liberties of individuals who are arrested or detained by the authorities.
- **Legal:** **Sec 330 & 331 of IPC** provides punishment for injury inflicted for extorting confession during custody.
 - ⊕ **Section 196 in Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023** calls for magisterial enquiry in case of custodial death.
- **Others:** **NHRC guidelines 1993, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights etc.**

Governance in democracy can only be by executive, not Courts: Vice-President

Emphasizing upon the **separation of power in a democracy**, he remarked that it is the **executive which is accountable to Parliament and the people in election**, not the courts.

Concept of Separation of Power

- Associated with the **French philosopher Montesquieu**, it is a fundamental principle in governance which **prevents the concentration of authority** in a single entity or individual.
 - ⊙ It divides governmental responsibilities into distinct branches, the **legislature, executive, and judiciary**.

Significance of Separation of Power in a Democracy

- **Prevents abuse of power to protect citizens from tyranny of state** by dividing authority in more than one centre. **E.g., Article 50 of Indian Constitution separates judiciary and executive.**
- It ensures **checks and balances**, limiting overreach and boosting accountability. **E.g., Kesavananda Bharati case**, where the Supreme Court limited Parliament's power to amend the Constitution under the **Basic Structure doctrine**.
- It upholds **rule of law and liberty**. **E.g., an independent judiciary** interprets laws fairly, reinforcing equality.

Separation of power in India

- Unlike the **strict separation under the Presidential system of the U.S.**, India allows **functional overlap**. **E.g., under the parliamentary system of India** the executive is drawn from the legislature.
- **Ensures independent working**: **E.g., under Articles 122 and 212**, courts are prohibited to inquire into the proceedings of Parliament/ State legislatures.
- **Pragmatic interdependence**: **E.g., judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts** are appointed by the President.



New World order will be regional, agenda-specific: External Affairs Minister

While addressing a preparatory meeting for the BIMSTEC Summit, Minister suggested that the **regional groups like BIMSTEC** should be approached from a more ambitious perspective in the **changing global order from multilateralism towards minilateralism**.

- Minilaterals are **informal and targeted grouping with fewer states (usually 3 or 4)** which intend to **address specific threat, contingency, or security issues**, sharing the same interest for resolving it within a finite period of time. **E.g., I2U2, BRICS, etc.**

Why is there a rise in agenda-specific minilaterals?

- **Limitations of multilateral institutions** such as the UN and WTO in **achieving consensus** among diverse member states.
 - ⊙ **Minilaterals** involve **fewer states, enabling faster decision-making**, and implementation. **E.g., the QUAD** showed rapid coordination in vaccine distribution during the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- **Great-power Rivalry**: Heightened tensions have **paralyzed larger multilateral frameworks**. **E.g., dysfunctional WTO's dispute settlement system**.
 - ⊙ As a response **regional Free Trade Agreements like RCEP** are being signed **between smaller numbers of countries**.
- **Emerging and urgent challenges** like **climate change, cybersecurity**, are not being addressed effectively and on a priority basis.
 - ⊙ On the other hand, agenda-specific groups like the **International Solar Alliance** allow for specialized expertise and resources to be pooled effectively.

Conclusion

Along with building agenda-specific partnerships with various countries at minilateral level, **India should continue to push for reforms in the multilateral organisations** such as UNSC and WTO to safeguard **universal rules-based global order**.

Challenges of Minilateralism

- Small groups are easier to build trust and maintain informality, but **agendas may stall due to government changes**. **E.g., QUAD's collapse in 2007** after the then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's resignation.
- **Lack of inclusivity**: **E.g., ASEAN** countries have expressed concerns about being sidelined by groups like AUKUS, threatening regional cohesion.
- **Limited resources**: Smaller coalitions may **lack the collective capacity to tackle large-scale global challenges** like climate change or pandemics due to **lack of funds and technological cooperation**.

Reciprocal Tariffs announced by the US President

While announcing the reciprocal tariffs, the President of the US announced **country-specific new tariffs** for more than 180 countries/ economies, with the **imposition of a 10% baseline tariff**.

- Announcement includes **27% reciprocal tariff on India**—half the rate India imposes on US imports.
 - ⊕ **Reciprocal tariffs aim to counter trade imbalances by imposing higher tariffs** on countries with which the importing country runs a trade deficit.
- Similar reciprocal tariffs imposed on other major economies include **China (34%), Japan (24%), the EU (20%)**, among others.

Reasons for Reciprocal Tariff

- Major reasons announced are **reindustrialization and retaliation against unfair trade practices**.
- It is a part of the backlash against **hyper globalization** and the rise of **Economic Nationalism**.
 - ⊕ **Economic Nationalism** is visible in **manufacturing onshoring policies, Make America Wealthy Again** promises, etc.

Economic Nationalism

- It is an **economic ideology** which favours **domestic control of economy, labour and capital formation**.
- **Two form:**
 - ⊕ **Developmentalism:** It uses industrial policy to shape national development goals. E.g., **planned economic model adopted in India post-independence period**.
 - ⊕ **Mercantilism or isolationism:** It seeks to increase the prosperity and power of a nation through restrictive trade practices. E.g., the recent **US Administration's America First policy**.

Lok Sabha Passes the Coastal Shipping Bill, 2024

The Bill provides a dedicated **legal framework for coastal trade** and **regulate all types of vessels**, including ships, boats, sailing vessels, and mobile offshore drilling units.

Key Provisions of Bill

- **License for Coasting Trade:** It removes the requirement of trading license for Indian vessels while **foreign vessels** require a **license issued by the Director General of Shipping (DGS)**.
 - ⊕ Coasting trade refers to the **carriage of goods or passengers by sea** from one place or port in India to another.
- **Strategic Plan and Database:** It mandates the formulation of a **National Coastal and Inland Shipping Strategic Plan** (revised biennially) and formation of a **National Database for Coastal Shipping**.
- **Authority to DGS:** It grants DGS the authority to seek information, issue directions, and enforce compliance.
- **Central Government:** It empowers the Central Government to provide exemptions and regulatory oversight, ensuring streamlined and efficient coastal shipping operations in India.

Significance

- **Decongest road and rail network** by propelling inland waterways and riverine economies.
- **Reducing dependence on foreign vessels for critical areas** by developing a coastal fleet owned and operated by Indian entities.
- **Reduced Logistics cost**, promotes green transport and regional development of coastal areas.

Also In News



Seaweed

India's **seaweed farming sector**, currently valued at Rs 200 crore, is projected to **expand to Rs 3,277 crore** over the next decade.

About Seaweed

- It is a **nutrient-rich sea plant** that grows in the ocean and seas.
- It contains **54 trace elements and essential nutrients** that **fight diseases** like cancer, diabetes, arthritis, heart problems and high blood pressure.
- **Key Products from Seaweed:**
 - ⊕ **Alginate:** A natural thickener from brown seaweed, used in food, cosmetics and medicine.
 - ⊕ **Agar:** A jelly-like substance from red seaweed, used in desserts, jams and laboratory cultures.
 - ⊕ **Carrageenan:** A gelling agent from red seaweed, commonly used in dairy and processed foods.



Tipitaka

The Prime Minister of Thailand has **gifted a copy of Tipitaka in Pali language to the Indian Prime Minister** on his ongoing visit.

About Tipitaka

- These are collections of **three sets (baskets) of Buddhist texts**, primarily in the Pali language, which forms the foundation of **Theravada Buddhism**. These include:
 - ⊕ **Vinaya Pitaka:** It included **rules and regulations** for those who joined the sangha or monastic order.
 - ⊕ **Sutta Pitaka:** It Included sermons and teachings of the Buddha.
 - ⊕ **Abhidhamma Pitaka:** It dealt with **philosophical matters** offering deep insights into the nature of reality.
- **Theravada Buddhism:** Followers of the **older Buddhist tradition** described themselves as **theravadins**, i.e., those who followed the path of old Teacher, the theras.



Zero Hour

On April 3, a record was set in Lok Sabha as 202 MPs spoke during a five hour long Zero Hour.

About Zero hour

- It is the **period immediately following Question Hour and the laying of papers**, before any listed business is taken up.
- **Timing:** It starts around 12 noon, which is why it is termed Zero Hour.
- It is **not formally recognised** in the **parliamentary procedure**.
- **Procedure for raising matters:** Members must **submit notices stating the subject** they wish to raise.
 - ⊕ **The Speaker** decides whether to allow the matter to be raised.



POSHAN Tracker

Union Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) announced that all Anganwadi Centres across India are now registered on the POSHAN Tracker application.

About POSHAN Tracker

- It is a mobile-based **application that enables real-time tracking of attendance, growth monitoring, and nutrition services** while replacing physical records with auto-generated monthly reports.
- Available in **24 languages**, it aims to enhance transparency, efficiency and accountability in nutrition service delivery.
- It is part of **Mission Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0**, a centrally sponsored scheme unifying Anganwadi services, POSHAN Abhiyaan, and the Scheme for Adolescent Girls (14-18 years) to combat malnutrition nationwide.



Chapata Chilli

The Warangal Chapata Chilli, or **Tomato Chilli**, from Telangana has been granted the GI (Geographical Indication) tag.

About Chapata Chilli (Tomato Chilli)

- **Unique Characteristics**
 - ⊕ **Bright red colour and round shape** resembling a tomato.
 - ⊕ It is **less spicy but has extensive flavour** due to its **capsicum oleoresin** properties.
- **Types:** It is of three types namely **Single Patti, Double Patti and Odalu**.



Pope's Pit Viper Venom

New Study has uncoded the mysteries of how the venom of Pope's Pit Viper works.

- Study can help establish the foundation for **venom toxicity, pharmaceutical advancements, and enhanced antivenom compositions**.
- Study becomes important as **India aims to decrease snakebite mortality by 50% by 2030**.

About Pope's Pit Viper (Trimeresurus popeiorum)

- **Habitat:** Tropical, sub-tropical wet mountain forests, bamboo forests, mountain scrublands, swamps etc.
- **Distribution:** India, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Malaysia.
 - ⊕ It is native to northern and northeastern parts of India.
- **IUCN Status:** **Least Concern**.



National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research

National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) is commemorating its 25th foundation day.

About NCPOR

- **Established in 1998** as an autonomous Research and Development Institution of Government of India, it is **located in Goa**.
- It is **India's premier R&D** institution responsible for the country's research activities in the polar and Southern Ocean realms.
 - ⊕ It manages the **Indian Antarctic Research Bases "Maitri" and "Bharati"**, and the **Indian Arctic base "Himadri"**.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Earth Sciences.



Baku to Belem Roadmap

India urges **BRICS nations** to unite on 'Baku to Belem Roadmap' to mobilise **USD 1.3 trillion in climate finance annually by 2035** to support Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Baku to Belem Roadmap

- **UNFCCC COP29, held in Baku (Azerbaijan)**, agreed on a new global finance goal and a framework for raising ambition for climate finance in run-up to COP30 in Belém (Brazil).
- It aims at **scaling up climate finance to developing country parties** to support low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development pathways and implement NDCs.

Place in News



Thailand (Capital: Bangkok)

Recently, India and Thailand have **upgraded their ties to strategic partnership**.

- The Government of Thailand has also released an iStamp depicting **Ramakien (Thai Ramayana) mural paintings**.

Political Features

- Located in **Southeast Asia**.
- It is part of the **regional groupings ASEAN and BIMSTEC**.
- **Land Border:** Myanmar (Northwest), Cambodia (East), Laos (Northeast) and Malaysia (South).
- **Water bodies:** Gulf of Thailand (South) and Andaman Sea (West).

Geographical Features

- **Major rivers:** Mekong, Chao Phraya, etc.
- **Climate:** Tropical monsoon.
- **Natural resources:** Tin, Rubber, Natural Gas, Tungsten, Tantalum, Timber, etc.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI