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Panel for Denotified, Semi-Nomadic, Nomadic Tribes

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The NITI Aayog has backed a proposal by Ministry of Social justice and Empowerment to set up a permanent commission for Denotified (DNT), Semi Nomadic (SNT), and Nomadic Tribes (NT). The commission will be set up on the lines of similar commissions for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes.

- In May 2018, the Ministry of Social justice and Empowerment had written to the NITI Aayog, asking for its stand on the report of the Bhiku Ramji Idate Commission on DNT, SNT, and NT communities.
- In response to this NITI Aayog has offered to set up a working group to come up with policy suggestions on issues related to the most deprived communities.
- It supports the suggestion by Bhiku Ramji Idate Commission to form a dedicated National Finance Development Corporation for DNT, SNT and NTs.
- It also supports the suggestion lowering tuition fees and relaxing admission conditions for children from the communities, and easy allotment of land and housing for members of the community in which 90% or more are landless.

Background

- The DNT, NT, SNT communities have been identified as the most marginalised by several commissions set up since Independence.
- The community has for long not been enumerated in the Census data. The Renke Commission report of 2008 had roughly estimated their population to be between 10-12 crore however none of its recommendations were implemented.

Denotified Tribes

- Denotified tribes are those that were notified under the Criminal Tribes Acts enforced during British Rule, whereby entire populations were branded criminals by birth. In 1952, the Act was repealed and the communities were de-notified.
- The Nomadic tribes maintain constant geographical mobility while semi-nomads are those who are on the move but return to a fixed habitations once a year, mainly for occupational reasons.

Bhiku Ramji Idate Commission

- The Idate Commission submitted its report in January 2018. It mentioned that a permanent commission for Denotified, Semi Nomadic, and Nomadic Tribes should have a prominent community leader as its chairperson, and a senior Union government bureaucrat, an anthropologist, and a sociologist as members.
- Some of the major recommendations of the panel include granting Constitutional protection to these communities under a separate third schedule after Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, making them eligible for reservation, and extending the protective cover of Prevention of Atrocities Act to them.
- Some of the issues raised by the report involve the repealing of the Habitual Offenders Act, provision of Public Distribution System (PDS) cards, special housing schemes for the largely landless community, establishment of a separate academy to preserve their art and culture, special education and health schemes.
- The Commission noted that post-independence policies for these communities have been mostly symbolic reparations, with post-liberalisation policies alienating them further from their land and occupations.
- The Ministry had also written to the NITI Aayog, asking whether it would set up a Working Group for framing Vision 2030 for development of these communities as per the UN Sustainable Development Goals.