



National Commission for Scheduled Castes

For Prelims: [National Commission of Schedule Caste \(NCSC\)](#), Article 338 of the Constitution of India, [National Commission for Scheduled Tribes \(NCST\)](#).

For Mains: National Commission of Schedule Caste (NCSC), Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

Source: [PIB](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment submitted the **Annual Report 2022-23 of the National Commission of Schedule Caste (NCSC)** to the President of India.

- The reports contain various recommendations on the issues entrusted to the Commission regarding the protection of Constitutional Safeguards of the [Scheduled Castes \(SCs\)](#) as enshrined in the Constitution of India.
- As per the mandate given to the **NCSC under Article 338** of the Constitution of India, it is the duty of the Commission to present to the President annually & at other times as the Commission may deem fit, report upon the working of the Constitutional Safeguards of the SCs.

What is the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSCs)?

- **About:**
 - The NCSC is a [Constitutional Body](#) established with a view to provide safeguards against the exploitation of Scheduled Castes and to promote and protect their social, educational, economic and cultural interests.
- **History:**
 - **Special Officer:**
 - Initially, the constitution provided for the appointment of a Special Officer under **Article 338**. The special officer was designated as the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
 - **65th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1990:**
 - It amended [Article 338 of the Constitution](#) and replaced the one-member system with a multi-member National Commission for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes(ST).
 - **89th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003:**
 - Article 338 was amended, and the erstwhile National Commission for SC and ST was replaced by two separate Commissions from the year 2004 which were:
 - [National Commission for Scheduled Castes \(NCSC\)](#) under **Article 338**.
 - [National Commission for Scheduled Tribes \(NCST\)](#) under **Article 338A**.
- **Composition:**
 - The NCSC comprises **a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, and three additional**

Members.

- These positions are filled through the President's appointment, indicated by a warrant under his hand and seal.
 - Their conditions of service and tenure of office are also determined by the President.

▪ Functions:

- To investigate and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and other legal safeguards for the SCs and to evaluate their working;
- To inquire into specific complaints concerning the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the SCs;
- To participate and advise on the planning process of socio-economic development of the SCs and to evaluate the progress of their development under the Union or a state;
- To present to the President, annually and at such other times as it may deem fit, reports upon the working of those safeguards;
- To make recommendations as to the measures that should be taken by the Union or a state for the effective implementation of those safeguards and other measures for the protection, welfare and socio-economic development of the SCs.
- Till 2018, the commission was also required to discharge similar functions with regard to the **other backward classes (OBCs)**. It was relieved from this responsibility by the **102nd Amendment Act, 2018**.

▪ Power of NCSC:

- The Commission is vested with the **power to regulate its own procedure**.
 - The Commission, while investigating any matter or inquiring into any complaint, **has all the powers of a civil court** trying a suit and in particular in respect of the following matters:
 - summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining him on oath;
 - receiving evidence on affidavits; and
 - requisitioning any public record from any court or office.
 - The Central and state governments are required to consult the Commission on all major policy matters affecting the SCs.

What are the other Constitutional Provisions for the Upliftment of the SCs?

- **Article 15:** The article specifically addresses the issue of discrimination based on caste, emphasising the protection and upliftment of SCs.
- **Article 17:** Article abolishes **Untouchability** and prohibits its practice in any form. It seeks to eliminate social discrimination and promote the equality and dignity of all individuals.
- **Article 46:** Article directs the State to promote the educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes and other weaker sections of society and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
- **Article 243D (4):** The provision mandates the reservation of seats for SCs in **Panchayats (local self-government institutions)** in proportion to their population in the area.
- **Article 243T (4):** The provision ensures the reservation of seats for SCs in **Municipalities (urban local bodies)** in proportion to their population in the area.
- **Article 330 and Article 332** provide for the reservation of seats in favour of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and in the legislative assemblies of the States (respectively).

Way forward

- Some critics argue that bureaucratic hurdles, political interference, and insufficient enforcement mechanisms have limited the NCSC's effectiveness.
- Additionally, there have been concerns about **delays in addressing complaints and inadequate representation of SC communities**.
- To address these issues, the NCSC could benefit from enhanced autonomy, increased resources, and more proactive measures to address systemic discrimination.
- Strengthening outreach programs, ensuring transparency, and fostering collaboration with civil society organisations can also contribute to its effectiveness in safeguarding the rights of SCs.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. With reference to 'Stand Up India Scheme', which of the following statements is/are correct? (2016)

1. Its purpose is to promote entrepreneurship among SC/ST and women entrepreneurs.
2. It provides for refinance through SIDBI.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a)** 1 only
- (b)** 2 only
- (c)** Both 1 and 2
- (d)** Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (c)

- Stand Up India Scheme was launched on 5th April, 2016. It seeks to promote entrepreneurship among Scheduled Caste/Schedule Tribe and Women. Hence, statement 1 is correct.
- The Scheme is expected to benefit a large number of such entrepreneurs, as it is intended to facilitate at least two such projects per bank branch (Scheduled Commercial Bank) on an average one for each category of entrepreneur.
- Refinance window through Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) with an initial amount of `10,000 crore. Hence, statement 2 is correct.

Mains

Q.1 What are the two major legal initiatives by the State since Independence addressing discrimination against Scheduled Tribes (STs)? **(2017)**

Q.2 Has caste lost its relevance in understanding the multi-cultural Indian Society? Elaborate your answer with illustrations. **(2020)**

Q.3 "Caste system is assuming new identities and associational forms. Hence caste system cannot be eradicated in India." Comment. **(2018)**

Q.4 Debate the issue of whether and how contemporary movements for assertion of Dalit identity work towards annihilation of caste. **(2015)**