



# Backward Classes in West Bengal

## Why in News?

The West Bengal government informed [the Supreme Court](#) that the State's Backward Classes Commission is initiating a new exercise to identify [Socially and Educationally Backward Communities \(SEBC\)](#) eligible for inclusion in the State's [Other Backward Classes \(OBC\) List](#).

## Key Points

- **Appeal Against High Court Judgment:**
  - The West Bengal government challenged the Calcutta High Court's decision in the Supreme Court.
  - [The High Court](#) had struck down **the State's policy of including several castes**, predominantly from Muslim communities, in the OBC List.
  - **High Court's Observations:**
    - The Calcutta High Court ruled that **religion was the sole criterion for designating these communities as OBC.**
    - It **criticized the inclusion of 77 Muslim classes as backward**, calling it an affront to the Muslim community as a whole.
- **Fresh Exercise to Identify Backward Communities:**
  - It was informed in the court that **the West Bengal Backward Classes Commission is conducting a new survey** to determine sections needing reservation.
  - The Court asked **the State to clarify the methodology and scope of its survey** to assess the social and educational backwardness of these communities.
  - The Court also questioned whether **these communities faced inadequate representation in State public services**, justifying their inclusion in the OBC List.
- **Impact of High Court Ruling on OBC Certificates:**
  - The High Court ruling affected five lakh OBC certificates issued in West Bengal since 2010.
  - However, the Court clarified that **individuals who had already secured jobs using these certificates would not be affected.**
- **Striking Down of 2012 Act Provisions:**
  - The High Court nullified specific sections of [the West Bengal Backward Classes \(Other than SCs and STs\) \(Reservation of Vacancies in Services and Posts\) Act, 2012.](#)
    - Struck-down provisions included Section 16, **the second part of Section 2(h), and Section 5(a)**, which **allocated 10% and 7% reservation to sub-classified categories.**
    - As a result, **OBC-A and OBC-B categories were removed from Schedule I** of the Act.

## Similar Religion-based Reservation in Other States

- **Kerala:** Provides an 8% Muslim quota within its 30% OBC quota.
- **Tamil Nadu and Bihar:** Also Include Muslim caste groups in their OBC quota.
- **Karnataka:** Had a 4% sub-quota for Muslims within the 32% OBC quota.
  - State government in 2023 redistributed this sub-quota among [Vokkaligas and Lingayats](#)

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