

Important Vocab For the Editorial

1. **confer** (verb) – give to, present to, grant to.
2. **fairly** (adverb) – simply, actually, absolutely.
3. **(be) vested with** (verb) – give/provide/grant a person the legal right.
4. **due process** (noun) – fair treatment (per established principles & procedures).
5. **tenure** (noun) – term, period, time.
6. **subject to** (verb) – dependent on, contingent on.
7. **litigation** (noun) – legal process, legal proceeding, legal action.
8. **oblique** (adjective) – indirect, inexplicit, roundabout/evasive.
9. **apparent** (adjective) – clear, evident, obvious.
10. **directive** (noun) – instruction, direction, regulation.
11. **the disadvantaged** (noun) – the underprivileged, the depressed, the people in need/want.
12. **categorise** (verb) – class, group, list.
13. **apportion** (verb) – assign, earmark/appropriate, designate.
14. **compartment** (noun) – section, part, category/class/group.
15. **beset** (verb) – trouble, bother, worry.
16. **discrimination** (noun) – inequity, prejudice, bigotry/intolerance.
17. **discern** (verb) – find out, discover, make out.
18. **carve out** (phrasal verb) – create, establish (something with effort).
19. **shrink** (verb) – lessen, reduce, decrease.
20. **pie** (noun) – something as a whole which can be shared as pieces/slices/parts.
21. **claimant** (noun) – applicant, candidate, petitioner/appellant.
22. **well advised** (adjective) – wise, sensible, advised.
23. **vulnerable** (adjective) – relating to a weak/neglected person who is in need of special care/support.

Quota politics: on U.P.'s move to confer SC status on 17 backward castes

The Adityanath regime's move to confer SC status on 17 backward castes has no legal basis

The Uttar Pradesh government's latest attempt to **extend the benefits available to Scheduled Castes to 17 castes that are now under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) list** has no legal basis and appears to be aimed at making political gains ahead of a round of by-elections to the State Assembly. It is fairly well-known that Parliament alone is vested with the power to include or exclude any entry in the SC list under Article 341 of the Constitution. Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Thawar Chand Gehlot has clarified this position in Parliament, while suggesting that the State government follow due process. Uttar Pradesh has unsuccessfully tried to get some backward castes declared

as Scheduled Castes in the past, once during the tenure of Mulayam Singh, and again during the rule of Akhilesh Yadav. In 2016, a notification was issued stating that 17 castes were to be treated as Scheduled Castes. The matter reached the Allahabad High Court, but in an interim order in March 2017, the court observed that in case any certificates were issued on the basis of the notification, these would be subject to the outcome of the litigation. More than two years later, this order has been utilised by the Yogi Adityanath government to restore the proposal in an oblique manner. Though it is quite apparent that it is not a judicial directive, the State government has asked authorities in all districts to issue certificates to those from these castes.

No doubt, these 17 castes comprise the most disadvantaged among the backward classes. Categorising the backward classes into two or three sections has been seen as one way to apportion the benefits of reservation among many social groups. In such an exercise, these castes may qualify for a compartment within the OBC quota. However, treating them as Scheduled Castes is beset with problems. For one thing, they may not qualify to be treated as SCs because they may not have suffered untouchability and social discrimination. Given the legal limitations on the State government's power to expand the SC list, it is not difficult to discern a political motive behind any move to confer SC status on sections of the OBC. When the Samajwadi Party was in power, one could say moving them to the SC list would have freed up more opportunities for the influential and politically dominant Yadavs in the OBC category. For the present BJP regime, the move could help carve out a vote bank from the newly declared SC groups. The Bahujan Samaj Party, which has opposed the move both in Parliament and outside, understands that new additions would shrink opportunities for the existing castes in the SC list. That is why its leader, Ms. Mayawati, has hinted that the reservation pie can be shared among more claimants only if its size is increased. The U.P. government would be well-advised to avoid misleading vulnerable sections with the promise of SC status.