

3. SC Starts Examining Vanniyar Quota Law

Prelims Syllabus: Rights Issues

Mains Syllabus: GS-II Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the Performance of these Schemes; Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies Constituted for the protection and betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.

Why in News?

- The Supreme Court recently began examining whether petitions challenging a Madras High Court decision declaring ultra vires a State quota law, which provided 10.5% special reservation to Vanniyars, a most backward community, ought to be referred to a larger Bench.

About the Issue:

- The Tamil Nadu Assembly had in February 2021, passed the then ruling AIADMK-piloted bill providing internal reservation of 10.5 per cent for Vanniyars, with the incumbent DMK government issuing an order in July, 2021 for its implementation.
- It had split the aggregate 20 per cent reservation for MBCs and Denotified Communities into three separate categories by regrouping castes and provided ten per cent plus sub-quota for Vanniyars, formally known as Vanniakula Kshatriyas.
- In fact petitions had been filed seeking internal reservation. The process of consultation for sub classification within 20 per cent earmarked for MBCs began in 2012. Tamil Nadu BC commission had recommended 10.5 per cent reservation for vanniyakula Kshastriya community, after door to door enumeration.

What was Madras HC's Observation?

- The judges said the state government cannot come out with such a legislation. This had been explained in the Constitution.
- The petitioners contended that if such a reservation was implemented, then the Vanniyar community would enjoy reservation in jobs and admission while 25 other castes under MBC and 68 others would have to share the Remaining Quota.

What was the Apex Court's Observation?

- A three-judge Bench of SC ordered that no fresh appointments to State Government Services or Admissions to Educational Institutions should be made till February 15, the next date of hearing in the case.

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- However, admissions and Appointments already made, pursuant to a Madras High Court order of August 25, would not be disturbed.
 - The Bench said the case was important and had implications on the future of a large number of students, State Government employees, etc. The court said it had to be heard expeditiously.

About Vanniyar Movement:

- Vanniyar are one of the largest and most consolidated backward communities in the state.
- They had raised massive protests in the mid-1980s demanding 20% reservation in the state, and 2% in central services.
- Their movement was backed by the Justice Party as well as the Self-Respect Movement.
- The agitation began in 1986 with activists sending hundreds of letters and telegrams to then Chief Minister M G Ramachandran seeking an audience.
- As there was no Response from MGR and the then Rajiv Gandhi government, agitators started Demonstrations in Community strongholds, then went on to blockading rail and Road Traffic.

