



# 26-06-2024 NEWS

## Is the ceiling the only criterion?

- The Supreme Court judgment in Indira Sawhney v. Government of India in 1992 set a ceiling of 50% for reservation by the state governments and the central government.
- In Tamil Nadu only 69% reservation has been given legal protection.
- In this case, the Nitish Kumar-led Bihar government conducted a caste-wise census in 2022.
- After the release of its results, Bihar government amended the reservation act to increase the reservation for OBCs from 12% to 18%, Extremely Backward Castes from 18% to 25%, Scheduled Castes from 16% to 20% and Scheduled Tribes from 1% to 2%.
- A case against this by Gaurav Kumar and some others came up for hearing in the Patna High Court. The court accepted the contention of the petitioner that the reservation for various communities has been increased based on their proportion in the total population and not on the basis of their respective communities getting adequate representation in government jobs.
- The verdict also stated that the total reservation amount of 75% including 10% for economically weaker sections is unconstitutional.
- Before giving reservation or increasing the amount of reservation to any social section it should be established on the basis of data that it is socially backward and members of that community are not adequately represented in government jobs.
- Conversely, using reservation for mere political purposes would destroy the soul of reservation.
- It is against this backdrop that political parties including the DMK have been insisting that a caste-wise census should be conducted along with the national census.
- But some object that it is likely to be misused for political purposes.
- At the same time, the Indra Sawhney judgment allows the reservation level to be increased beyond 50% in 'extraordinary circumstances'.
- The judgment recognizes that certain special privileges are necessary to ensure equal opportunities for people living in remote areas like tribals.

## Assange released from British prison

- WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who is facing espionage charges in the US, has been released from British prison.
- He will be freed under an agreement made with the US government. He is expected to plead guilty in that country's court and then return to his home country of Australia.

### WikiLeaks

- Julian Assange, 52, started WikiLeaks in 2006 with friends.
- Through that site, he caused a stir in April 2010 when he released secret video recordings of US military abuses in the Iraq war.

### American War

- It featured footage of 18 innocent civilians, including a Reuters photojournalist, being shot dead by US soldiers in a helicopter during a 2007 airstrike in Baghdad.

- After that, Julian Assange published more than 3.9 lakh US military combat reports exchanged between 2004 and 2009 under the title 'Afghan War Trails'.
- Later, in November 2010, the tapes of diplomatic conversations he released created a global sensation.
- Through those records, the US spied on the UN and other world leaders. The internal conflict between the United States and its allies. American consular officials documented abuses around the world.
- Various secrets have come out, such as the fact that the United States helped spark anti-government protests in West Asian countries in the name of the Arab Spring.
- The US Department of Justice accused Julian Assange of posing a threat to the security of the United States through such secret document leaks.
- A criminal case was filed against him in 2010 for espionage.
- Meanwhile, Assange was prosecuted in Sweden that same year for sexual assault. Under the case, Swedish authorities issued a European-wide arrest warrant for him, who had arrived in Britain, to be extradited to Sweden.
- Sex charges against Assange in Sweden withdrawn. However, he must be extradited to his country to face espionage charges.
- In this context, it was reported at night that the British authorities released him from prison under the agreement made between the United States and Julian Assange in the presence of Australia.
- Julian Assange will be extradited from Britain to the US District Court in the Northern Mariana Islands to enforce the deal.
- He is expected to be tried there, sentenced and then released.

### **Speaker Election**

- Historical records show that the first Lok Sabha Speaker's election was held in May 1952. The candidate Ganesh Vasudev Mavlanker became the first speaker of lok sabha.
- Om Birla, the ruling party's favorite, is contesting for the post. On behalf of the opposition parties, K. Suresh competes.
- The Speaker of the Lok Sabha is considered as the head of the Parliament. Nationally, his status for the position is sixth on par with that of a Supreme Court judge.
- The top five positions are the President, Vice President, Prime Minister, Governors of States and former Presidents, Deputy Prime Minister.
- Apart from being a Lok Sabha MP, he does not have any specific qualifications to contest for the post of Lok Sabha Speaker.
- Meera Kumar, daughter of former Deputy Prime Minister Jagajivanram, was appointed as the first woman Speaker of the Lok Sabha.

