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LEGATIO 4.0

THE KURUKSHETRA OF DIPLOMACY

LEGATIO 4.0 / STUDY GUIDE SERIES

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HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE, PARLIAMENT OF INDIA

AGENDA / FOCUS

Deliberation on a Nationwide Caste Census and its implications on the Reservation Policy in India.

31 JUL – 02 AUG 2026

DELHI PUBLIC SCHOOL, SILIGURI

THE KURUKSHETRA OF DIPLOMACY

DELEGATE RESEARCH EDITION

LEGATIO 4.0

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dear Prospective Members,

At the outset on behalf of the Executive Board, we extend a warm welcome to all of you and congratulate you on being a part of the Lok Sabha being simulated at LEGATIO 4.0 at Delhi Public School, Siliguri.

The committee being simulated, unlike most other simulations you must have heard of or been a part of, shall focus on political intellect, logical intellect, analytical application of thoughts, and strategic application of thoughts in addressing the issue(s) at hand.

This committee will be Bilingual - English and Hindi. No translations shall be provided. The Documentation though will be only in English. Therefore, we encourage those with basic proficiency in both English and Hindi to sign up.

Kindly note, we are not looking for existing (read: impractical) solutions, or statements that would be a copy paste of what the person you are representing has already stated; instead, we seek an out of the box solution from you, while knowing and understanding the impending limitations of the person and his politics you represent. Given the extremely political and volatile nature of the agenda of this committee, your presence of mind and analytical aptitude is something which we as the executive board would be looking to test.

Kindly do not limit your research to the areas highlighted below; but ensure that you logically deduce and push your research to areas associated with the issues mentioned. But do note, the agenda is only one element of the committee which covers about half of your preparation, it is imperative that by design you be well prepared with the general political updates pertaining to the state and specifically your constituency.

IMPORTANT: In this committee we will be revamping the entire Rules of Procedure and aligning it as much as reasonably possible with the real simulation of the Lok Sabha. A brief RoP (Rules of Procedure) guide shall be explained to you during session 1 of the conference. As part of the new procedures, or should we rather say – ‘real procedures’ only 30-40% of the committee time shall be utilized to discuss on the pre-determined agenda. Majority of the revised RoP’s shall be borrowed from the ‘Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha – 2024, 17th Edn.’

As a result, your general political awareness and detailed awareness about issues pertaining to your state and constituency in specific are pivotal as they could become topics of discussion in the committee. We therefore urge you to keep yourself updated with latest updates pertaining to national, regional, state and constituency level political updates (of

the MP you are representing). Failing which, it would become extremely difficult to manage the pace and expectations of the committee.

Another place members usually err is in understanding their stance and approach towards an issue and other members in co-relation to their political party and its ideology. Please note – being political and being in sync with the stance of your party in general while keeping in mind the person you are representing is non-negotiable. Yes, we do not want a replica of the person, rather we want to see a better version of the person while keeping the individual and political limitations and realities still in place.

Kindly note, that unlike most conventional /unconventional committees you have attended, this committee shall have substantial “substantive” intervention by the Executive Board.

The objective of this background guide is to provide you with a ‘background’ to the issue(s) at hand and therefore it might seem to some as not being comprehensive enough.

We are sure however that this background guide would be a perfect launch pad to start with your research. But please ensure this isn’t your only research. This guide shall deal only with a skeletal overview of the agenda(s) and ancillary aspects. You may carry your laptops / tabs with you which may be permitted to be used upon the discretion of the executive board. But Mobile phones shall not be allowed at any cost. It is imperative that all of you follow this guideline. Non-adherence to this rule would result in immediate suspension from the committee. There is a Zero tolerance policy towards Internet usage during committee proceedings unless we permit the same explicitly. Attendance in all substantive committee sessions is a qualifying criteria for awards in addition to other benchmarks that might be stipulated in the Committee Guidelines below.

Good Luck.

Executive Board, Lok Sabha, Legatio 4.0 2026.

Basic Information:

Duration of the Session: 3 Days

Date of the Session: Realtime - Days of the Conference

Nature of Business: Discussion on Matter of Public Interest u/r 184 read along with r/ 190.

Matter of Discussion : Deliberation on a Nationwide Caste Census and its implications on the Reservation Policy in India.

Scope for Private Members’ Business: No.

COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

Key Pointers to Note:

1. Lok Sabha is a legislative committee primarily. That said, it can't be converted into a highly technical legal committee per se in terms of your approach, an issue we mostly encounter in simulations at MUN's/YP's.
2. Sloganeering and Walkouts and other such over-dramatic political maneuverings, while not recommended, may be executed but ought to be moderated in line with the Rules of Business of the Lok Sabha.
3. The simulation of a Lok Sabha is meant to reflect on a better version of the MP you are representing, not a replica. You will be expected to showcase the better version of the individual you represent keeping in mind the individual and political ideological limitations.
4. Be thorough with your political ideology – from a Political Party perspective and individual perspective. (No, they aren't necessarily the same.)
5. There shall be no award by default – you earn your award. The criteria is pretty simple.

To qualify for the:

Best Parliamentarian award – Score a minimum of 75%

High Commendation – Score a minimum of 68%

Special Mention – Score a minimum of 60%

Honourable Mention – Score a minimum of 50% (Comes with a Certificate of Merit).

As you may have noticed there shall be no fake award called the Verbal Mention, if you deserve an award, you shall get it on the stage like the others. And every single award from this committee (if you qualify for any, that is) shall be given on the stage with a certificate for sure. Merely meeting the qualification criteria doesn't mean you will get that specific award - especially if there is more than 1 MP qualifying for the award. In such cases - we would go in the order of who is ranked higher and give them that award.

6. The official language of the committee for documentation purposes shall be English. However, all oral communication in the committee shall be bilingual - English and /or Hindi.
7. Should there be any Press Conference by the IP / National Press – the same may be scheduled during the start of Day 3. No time before or later to ensure that there is no break of flow in committee proceedings.
8. Sample Scoresheet will be explained to you during the RoP session. Details of the scoring criterion shall be explained to you during the RoP session (session 1) of the committee.

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Matter of Discussion : Deliberation on a Nationwide Caste Census and its implications on the Reservation Policy in India

Nature of Business : Discussion on Matter of Public Interest u/r 184 read along with r/ 190

Introduction and Purpose of the Deliberation

The deliberation on a nationwide caste census, and its implications for the reservation policy of India, arises at a moment when questions of social justice, representation, and the distribution of public resources have returned to the very centre of national political discourse. For the first time since 1931, the Indian State has committed itself to enumerating the caste of every citizen as part of the decennial census. What might appear at first glance to be a technical exercise in data collection is, in truth, a decision with profound constitutional, political, and social consequences.

A census is never merely a count. It is an instrument through which the State renders its population legible, and the categories it chooses to count inevitably shape the categories through which politics, policy, and identity are subsequently organized. The decision to enumerate caste therefore raises foundational questions: Will counting caste entrench it further, or will it finally provide the empirical basis on which affirmative action can be rationally designed? Should the architecture of reservations – its ceilings, its categories, its internal distribution – be revisited in light of fresh data? And what obligations does the State incur once it possesses granular knowledge of the socio-economic condition of every caste group?

This discussion under Rule 184, read with Rule 190, is not a debate on a Bill. There is no clause-by-clause scrutiny to be undertaken. Instead, the House is called upon to deliberate on a matter of urgent public importance, culminating in a substantive expression of the will of the House. Members must therefore engage not only with the mechanics of enumeration but with the deeper question of what the Republic owes to those whom history has placed at its margins – and whether data can become, as some have argued, the new instrument of social justice.

Historical Background: Caste Enumeration in India

Caste enumeration in India has a long and contested history. The colonial censuses, beginning in 1871-72 and continuing through 1931, recorded caste comprehensively. The 1931 Census, conducted under Census Commissioner J.H. Hutton, remains to this day the last occasion on which the caste of every individual in India was counted and published. The 1941 Census

collected caste data but, owing to the Second World War, the tabulations were never fully published.

After Independence, the Government of India took a deliberate decision to discontinue the enumeration of caste, save for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, whose enumeration was constitutionally necessary for the administration of reservations and other safeguards. The prevailing view of the early Republic was that counting caste would perpetuate it, and that a modernizing nation ought to look beyond such categories. Every census from 1951 to 2011 therefore recorded only SC and ST status, leaving the numerical strength of the Other Backward Classes – and indeed of all other castes – a matter of estimation and extrapolation.

This absence of data became increasingly consequential. The Kalelkar Commission (1953-55) and later the Mandal Commission (1979-80) were both compelled to rely on the 1931 data, projections, and sample surveys to estimate the population of the backward classes. The Mandal Commission's famous estimate – that Other Backward Classes constitute approximately 52% of the population – was an extrapolation from 1931 figures, not a contemporary count. That a policy edifice as vast as OBC reservation rests upon a half-century-old estimate has remained one of the most persistent criticisms of Indian affirmative action.

In 2011, the Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) was conducted alongside, but outside, the decennial census. Crucially, it was not carried out under the Census Act, 1948, and was administered by other ministries rather than the Registrar General of India. The exercise returned more than 46 lakh distinct caste names – a consequence of variant spellings, regional nomenclature, and differing self-identification – and the Union Government subsequently took the position that the caste data so collected was unreliable and unfit for publication. The caste component of the SECC has never been released, and its fate has been repeatedly invoked in debates over methodology ever since.

The Evolution of the Reservation Framework

The reservation policy of independent India began with constitutional guarantees for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in education, public employment, and legislatures. Article 15(4), inserted by the First Amendment in 1951 following the decision in *State of Madras v. Champakam Dorairajan*, empowered the State to make special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes. Article 16(4) permits reservation in public employment for backward classes not adequately represented in the services of the State.

The second great expansion came with the implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations in 1990, when the V.P. Singh government extended 27% reservation in central government employment to the Other Backward Classes. The upheaval that followed –

politically and on the streets – reshaped North Indian politics and gave rise to what is often described as the era of Mandal politics. Reservation for OBCs in central educational institutions followed in 2006 through the 93rd Constitutional Amendment and consequent legislation.

The third structural shift occurred in 2019, when the 103rd Constitutional Amendment introduced a 10% reservation for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) among those not covered by existing reservations – the first reservation in Indian history based solely on economic criteria, and the first to breach, by constitutional design, the 50% ceiling in central reservations. The 105th Amendment of 2021 subsequently restored to the States the power to identify and maintain their own lists of socially and educationally backward classes.

Alongside these expansions, the question of distribution within categories has gained salience. The Justice G. Rohini Commission, constituted in 2017 to examine the sub-categorisation of OBCs in the central list, submitted its report in 2023; its findings have not been made public, but the underlying concern – that a small number of dominant castes corner a disproportionate share of OBC reservation benefits – is widely acknowledged. Any nationwide caste census would bear directly upon this question, for sub-categorisation without caste-wise data is an exercise in approximation.

Judicial Background and Constitutional Principles

The constitutional law of reservations has been shaped decisively by the judiciary, and members must be conversant with this jurisprudence, for it defines both the possibilities and the limits of any policy response to caste data.

In *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India* (1992), a nine-judge Bench upheld the 27% OBC reservation while laying down the framework that has governed the field since: reservations under Articles 15(4) and 16(4) ought not, save in extraordinary circumstances, exceed 50%; the ‘creamy layer’ among the backward classes must be excluded from the benefit of reservation; and caste may be a relevant, indeed often the dominant, indicator of social backwardness, though it cannot be the sole determinant. The judgment also underscored that the identification of backwardness must rest on adequate data – an observation of obvious relevance to the present deliberation.

In *M. Nagaraj v. Union of India* (2006) and *Jarnail Singh v. Lachhmi Narain Gupta* (2018), the Court dealt with reservations in promotion, requiring the State to demonstrate inadequacy of representation through quantifiable data, while extending the creamy layer principle to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the context of promotions. The insistence on quantifiable data as a precondition for affirmative action has repeatedly foregrounded the absence of comprehensive caste statistics.

In *Janhit Abhiyan v. Union of India* (2022), a Constitution Bench upheld the 103rd Amendment and the EWS reservation, holding inter alia that the 50% ceiling articulated in *Indra Sawhney* is not an inviolable feature of the Constitution in all circumstances. This holding has been read by many as opening the constitutional door to reservation regimes exceeding 50%, provided they can be justified – a reading whose implications become acute the moment caste-wise population data becomes available.

Most recently, in *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh* (2024), a seven-judge Bench held that sub-classification within the Scheduled Castes is constitutionally permissible, with several judges observing that the State must ground such sub-classification in empirical data. Members should note the arc of this jurisprudence: at every turn, the Court has demanded data, and at every turn, the State has confronted the absence of a comprehensive count. The caste census is, in one sense, the answer the judiciary has long been soliciting.

The deliberation also engages Articles 14, 15, 16, 46, 246 (Census being Entry 69 of the Union List), 340, 341, 342 and 342A of the Constitution, as well as the Census Act, 1948, under which the decennial census is conducted. Members are expected to be thorough with these provisions.

State-Level Surveys and Their Consequences

In the absence of a national count, several States undertook their own caste-based surveys, and their experiences constitute essential context for this deliberation.

The most consequential of these was the Bihar Caste-Based Survey of 2023. Conducted as a ‘survey’ rather than a ‘census’ – a distinction necessitated by the exclusive competence of the Union over the census – the exercise found that the Extremely Backward Classes and Other Backward Classes together constitute approximately 63% of the State’s population. Acting on these findings, the Bihar legislature raised reservations in the State to 65%, which, together with the 10% EWS quota, took total reservation to 75%. In June 2024, the Patna High Court struck down the enhanced quota as violative of the ceiling in *Indra Sawhney*; the matter is in appeal before the Supreme Court. The Bihar episode thus crystallizes the central legal question of this agenda: can fresh data justify breaching the 50% ceiling, or does the ceiling stand irrespective of what the data reveals?

Karnataka’s Socio-Economic and Educational Survey – popularly, if inaccurately, called the caste census – was conducted in 2015, and its report became the subject of prolonged political controversy within and outside the ruling party, with dominant communities disputing its findings even before their publication; the State has since moved towards a fresh survey. Telangana conducted a comprehensive Socio-Economic, Educational, Employment, Political and Caste Survey in 2024-25, and its legislature has sought to enhance reservations for Backward

Classes in local bodies, education, and employment on the strength of its findings, again raising the ceiling question. These State experiments demonstrate both the political demand for caste data and the constitutional friction that its use immediately generates.

The Union's Decision and Census 2027

On 30 April 2025, the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs decided that caste enumeration would be included in the forthcoming decennial census. The Census of India 2027 was notified in the Gazette on 16 June 2025 under the Census Act, 1948, and the Union Cabinet approved the scheme for its conduct. The census is to proceed in two phases: the Houselisting and Housing Census from April to September 2026, and Population Enumeration in February 2027, with a reference date of 1 March 2027 (1 October 2026 for Ladakh and other snow-bound, non-synchronous areas). It will be the first fully digital census in the country's history, with provision for self-enumeration through a dedicated portal, and caste data is to be captured electronically in the second phase.

The methodology of enumeration remains, as on the freeze date, the single most consequential open question. A pre-test of the Population Enumeration phase commenced in early July 2026 across sixteen States and Union Territories. In this rehearsal, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes continue to be recorded against pre-assigned codes drawn from the notified lists, while all other respondents record their caste in an 'open column' – a free-text field in which the enumerator records whatever the respondent declares. Officials have emphasized that this is a trial, and that the final questionnaire and methodology will be settled only after field feedback is assessed.

The stakes of this methodological choice are considerable. The open-column approach respects self-identification but risks reproducing the SECC experience of lakhs of unclassifiable entries; a pre-coded list ensures classifiability but requires the State to settle, in advance, contested questions of which castes exist, how they are named, and where sub-castes and synonyms belong. Members should further note that the 2027 Census will also serve as the basis for the next delimitation of parliamentary constituencies and for the implementation of women's reservation, which entangles the caste count with the most sensitive questions of federal political power – particularly the apprehensions of the southern States regarding the redistribution of Lok Sabha seats.

Key Areas of Debate

The deliberation is likely to organize itself around several interrelated questions, and members would do well to prepare positions on each.

First, the question of the 50% ceiling. If the census reveals – as State surveys suggest it may – that backward classes constitute a substantial majority of the population, the demand to raise or remove the ceiling will acquire formidable momentum. Proponents will invoke Janhit Abhiyan's dilution of the ceiling and the principle of proportionate representation, captured in the political slogan that participation should mirror population. Opponents will invoke Indra Sawhney's warning that reservation is an exception that cannot swallow the rule of equality, and the interests of those left outside the reserved categories.

Second, the question of sub-categorisation. Caste-wise data will make visible the internal stratification of the OBC, SC and ST categories, strengthening the case – endorsed in Davinder Singh – for distributing benefits more equitably within them. This, in turn, threatens the position of dominant communities within each category, and members representing such communities will face acute cross-pressures.

Third, the question of the creamy layer: whether income-based exclusion should be recalibrated, extended, or resisted in light of fresh socio-economic data.

Fourth, the question of methodology and data governance: open column versus coded list; the classification of lakhs of jati names into administrable categories; the privacy of caste data in a fully digital census; the linkage of the count with delimitation; and the institutional question of who shall analyse, publish, and act upon the data once collected. The unreleased SECC data stands as a cautionary tale of what occurs when the State collects what it will not publish.

Fifth, the forward-looking questions: whether caste data should inform welfare targeting beyond reservations; whether demands for reservation in the private sector will gain traction; and whether new castes and communities will press claims for inclusion, exclusion, or reclassification once the numbers are known. Members should anticipate that the publication of caste data will not settle the politics of caste; it will inaugurate a new and more precise phase of it.

Political Landscape and Indicative Party Positions

Any realistic simulation of the Lok Sabha must reflect not only ideological differences but also how parties balance principle, governance, and political optics. On an issue such as the caste census, positions have evolved considerably in recent years, and members must be alive to both the stated stance and the strategic subtext of the party they represent.

The Bharatiya Janata Party approaches the caste census from a position that has visibly shifted. Having long expressed reservations about caste enumeration as socially divisive, the party, through the decision of April 2025, has itself become the author of the first caste census since 1931. Its members are likely to frame the decision as evidence of the government's commitment

to social justice with stability – enumeration conducted transparently under the Census Act rather than through what it would characterize as politically motivated State surveys. At the same time, the party would resist any automatic translation of data into an expanded quota regime, emphasizing instead welfare delivery, the interests of the poor across all communities (including through the EWS quota), and its broader social vision that seeks to harmonize caste identities rather than sharpen them. On the ceiling, the party is likely to counsel caution and constitutional propriety; on sub-categorisation, it may find opportunity, given its outreach to non-dominant OBC and SC communities.

The Indian National Congress is likely to claim both paternity and urgency. The party has made the caste census a central plank of its social justice platform, demanding not merely enumeration but the publication of data, the removal of the 50% ceiling, and proportionate expansion of reservations. Its members would argue that the government's conversion on the issue is belated and electorally motivated, that the SECC data was suppressed, and that counting without a commitment to act upon the count is an exercise in evasion. The Congress narrative would draw on constitutional morality, the Mandal legacy, and the demand that the census methodology be settled transparently and in consultation with the Opposition.

Parties of the Mandal tradition – the Samajwadi Party, the Rashtriya Janata Dal, and the Janata Dal (United), among others – will treat the caste census as the vindication of a decades-long demand. The RJD and JD(U) will point to Bihar's survey as the pathbreaker and press the Union to defend enhanced reservations before the Supreme Court. These parties are likely to be the most insistent on the principle of proportionate share, on raising the ceiling, and on the swift publication of caste-wise data.

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam would approach the deliberation through its long anti-caste, social justice tradition, supporting enumeration and expanded affirmative action – Tamil Nadu's own reservation regime, protected in the Ninth Schedule, already stands at 69%. Simultaneously, the party would sound the federal alarm: the linkage of the 2027 Census with delimitation raises, for Tamil Nadu and the southern States, the prospect of diminished parliamentary weight as the price of demographic discipline, and its members may insist that the House address enumeration and delimitation as inseparable questions.

The Trinamool Congress would support the principle of social justice while contesting the Union's stewardship, raising questions of methodology, data security, federal consultation, and the burden placed upon State machinery. The Left parties would articulate the most structurally transformative position, viewing caste data as an instrument for confronting the intersection of caste and class – supporting enumeration, publication, sub-categorisation grounded in evidence, and extension of anti-discrimination obligations to the private sector. The Aam Aadmi Party

would foreground delivery: data, in its telling, matters only insofar as it improves schools, hospitals, and employment for the disadvantaged.

Regional parties will adopt hybrid positions shaped by their State's caste arithmetic – some pressing for inclusion or reclassification of specific communities, others guarding dominant-caste interests against sub-categorisation, and nearly all raising questions of implementation, funding, and federal respect. Members are reminded that on this agenda, the fault lines run within parties as much as between them; a member's constituency and community context may pull against the party line, and the skill lies in navigating that tension credibly.

Controversies and Public Discourse

The caste census has been among the most contested public questions of the past half-decade, and members should be conversant with the principal lines of controversy.

The first concerns motive and timing. Critics of the Union's decision characterize it as a reversal compelled by electoral pressure following the traction gained by the Opposition's caste census campaign and the Bihar survey; the government presents it as a considered decision to place enumeration on a sound statutory footing. The second concerns the suppressed SECC data, which remains a standing grievance and a cautionary precedent invoked by those who fear that data collected in 2027 may meet a similar fate. The third concerns methodology, where the open-column pre-test has revived the debate over classifiability, synonyms, and the politics of naming castes.

A fourth controversy concerns the social consequences of counting. A significant strand of opinion – found across the political spectrum – holds that enumeration will harden caste identities, incentivize competitive backwardness, and invite a scramble for reclassification. The counter-position holds that caste operates with full force whether or not it is counted, and that the refusal to count serves only those whom the existing distribution of resources favours. A fifth concerns the delimitation linkage, which has introduced an inter-regional dimension: the southern States' apprehension that the very census which delivers caste justice may simultaneously redistribute parliamentary power towards the more populous north. Members should expect these controversies to surface repeatedly, and should prepare to engage them from within the ideological and regional position of the member they represent.

Conclusion

The deliberation on a nationwide caste census is, in the final analysis, a deliberation on the informational foundations of Indian social justice. For seventy-five years, the Republic has administered one of the world's most ambitious systems of affirmative action upon estimates

inherited from a colonial count. The decision to enumerate caste in the Census of 2027 ends that era of approximation – but it opens, rather than closes, the fundamental questions: What follows from the numbers? Must reservation expand to mirror the population? Should benefits be redistributed within categories? Can the 50% ceiling survive contact with the data? And can the State be trusted to publish, and to act upon, what it counts?

Members should resist the temptation to treat the census as a proxy war over reservation alone. The data will bear upon welfare targeting, political representation, delimitation, federal relations, and the self-understanding of Indian society. Equally, members should resist the opposite temptation of treating enumeration as an unqualified good; the design of the count – its methodology, its safeguards, its institutional custody – will determine whether it becomes an instrument of justice or of grievance.

For participants in this simulation, it is important to recognize that the debate is not confined to the question as framed. It extends to questions of principle, precedent, and policy design. It requires an engagement with legal reasoning, socio-economic realities, and political strategy. Most importantly, it demands an awareness that the outcomes of such debates have tangible consequences for the lives of individuals and communities. Whether the first caste census in nearly a century becomes a landmark of substantive equality or a monument to political expediency will depend on the depth of deliberation – in the country, and in this House.