



Kurmis' Push for ST Status

Why in News?

Recently, the Kurmi Community has called off the agitation in Bengal, asking for the inclusion in the [ST \(Scheduled Tribe\)](#) Status from [Other Backward Class \(OBC\)](#).

- They also want their Kurmali language to be included in the [Eighth Schedule of the Constitution](#).

What is the Background?

- Kurmis were not included among the communities classified as STs in the 1931 Census and were **excluded from the ST list in 1950**.
- In 2004, the Jharkhand government recommended the community be added to the ST list **rather than be categorized as OBCs**.
- Following the recommendation, the matter went to the **Tribal Research Institute (TRI)**, which held that Kurmis are a sub-caste of **Kunbis and not tribals**. Based on this, the **Centre rejected the demand of Kurmis** to be considered as ST.
- According to the Tribal Development Department of the state government, the state's tribal population is almost 53 lakhs as per Census 2011, or about 5.8% of the state's total population.

What is the Process of Inclusion under ST?

- The process for including a community in the list of ST follows a set of **modalities established in 1999**.
- The respective State or Union Territory government must **initiate the proposal for inclusion, which then goes to the Union Tribal Affairs Ministry** and subsequently to the Office of the Registrar General of India (ORGI).
- If the ORGI approves the inclusion, the proposal is then sent to the [National Commission for Scheduled Tribes](#), and if they concur, the proposal is forwarded to the Cabinet for amendment to the [Constitution \(Scheduled Tribes\) Order, 1950](#).

Who are the Kurmis?

- **About:**
 - Kurmis are a landowning farming community whose **status varies from place to place**.
 - Kurmis are referred to as **“progressive farmers”** who **“avail of maximum benefits of all the development schemes** available in the area and region.
 - Kurmis are distributed across several states — Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Goa, and Karnataka.
- **Caste Status:**
 - In most states, Kurmis belong to the OBC in both the central and state lists for reservations.
 - In Gujarat, Patels, who are linked to Kurmis, are in the general category, and have been demanding OBC status.

- In West Bengal, Odisha, and Jharkhand — where **Kurmi is written as 'Kudmi' — Kurmis** want to be included among Scheduled Tribes.
- **Kurmali Language:**
 - Kurmali language is a language spoken by the Kurmi community, primarily in the Indian states of **Bihar, Jharkhand, and Odisha.**
 - The Kurmali language is a **member of the Indo-Aryan language family and belongs to the Bihari language family.** It shares some similarities with Maithili and Magahi. It has its own script called "Kurmi Kudali" which is a modified version of the Devanagari script.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q1. Every year, a month long ecologically important campaign/festival is held during which certain communities/tribes plant saplings of fruit-bearing trees. Which of the following are such communities/ tribes? (2014)

- (a) Bhutia and Lepcha
- (b) Gond and Korku
- (c) Irula and Toda
- (d) Sahariya and Agariya

Ans: (b)

Q2. The provisions in Fifth Schedule and Sixth Schedule in the Constitution of India are made in order to (2015)

- (a) protect the interests of Scheduled Tribes
- (b) determine the boundaries between States
- (c) determine the powers, authority and responsibilities of Panchayats
- (d) protect the interests of all the border States

Ans: (a)

Q3. Under which Schedule of the Constitution of India can the transfer of tribal land to private parties for mining be declared null and void? (2019)

- (a) Third Schedule
- (b) Fifth Schedule
- (c) Ninth Schedule
- (d) Twelfth Schedule

Ans: (b)

Q4. If a particular area is brought under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India, which one of the following statements best reflects the consequence of it? (2022)

- (a) This would prevent the transfer of land of tribal people to non-tribal people.
- (b) This would create a local self-governing body in that area.
- (c) This would convert that area into a Union Territory.
- (d) The State having such areas would be declared a Special Category State.

Ans: (a)

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