

RS. 8 LAKH 'REASONABLE' CAP FOR EWS QUOTA: CENTRE

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

“Secondly, in case of OBC creamy layer, income from salaries, agriculture and traditional artisanal professions are excluded from the consideration whereas the Rs. 8 lakh criteria for EWS includes all sources, including farming. So, despite being the same cut-off number, their composition is different and hence, the two cannot be equated,” the committee reasoned. It found no fault in the uniform application of the Rs. 8-lakh criteria across the country.

“The desirability of a uniform income-based threshold has been upheld by the Supreme Court, and it can be adopted across the country as a matter of economic and social policy,” it said.

The report is the result of the Supreme Court’s repeated grilling of the government, since October, to explain how it zeroed in on the figure of ‘Rs. 8 lakh’ as the annual income criterion to identify EWS among forward classes of society for grant of 10% reservation in National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) medical admissions under the All India Quota (AIQ) category.

The Supreme Court’s query was significant as the One Hundred and Third Constitutional Amendment of 2019, which introduced the 10% EWS quota, is itself under challenge before a larger Bench. The Amendment is under question for making economic criterion as the sole ground for grant of reservation benefits.

“The figure ensures that most low-income people who are not required to pay income tax are not excluded and are covered in EWS and at the same time it should not be so high that it becomes over-inclusive by including many incomes tax-paying middle-and high-income families into EWS,” the report reasoned.

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