With leaders of the Gujjar agitation for reservations calling off their stir, the Rajasthan government has averted what could have been a prolonged crisis. There is a sense of *déjà vu* amid all this. Gujjar leaders have held various rounds of protests over the last decade and a half, demanding reservations in educational institutions and employment in a separate backward category that is apart from the existing 21% set aside for Other Backward Classes in the State. Despite governments bringing in legislation towards this end, they have been struck down on the grounds that the additional quota would take the quantum of reservation above the 50% limit set by the Supreme Court in the *Indra Sawhney* judgment. On Wednesday, the Rajasthan State Assembly passed legislation providing 5% reservation to Gujjars and four other nomadic communities, classifying them as “extremely backward classes”. But this time, the circumstances have arguably changed with the passing of the 103rd Amendment to the Constitution that allows for a 10% quota for the economically backward among communities that do not enjoy any form of reservation. The State government has also added a line to the Bill explicitly referring to the amendment, which effectively breaches the 50% limit set for reservations by the Supreme Court. It remains to be seen how the judiciary will tackle this question in light of the 103rd amendment, the constitutionality of which is under challenge.

The demand by Gujjars has a specific context. In Rajasthan, the community is currently eligible for reservations as an OBC community. They had in the mid- and late-2000s agitated for inclusion in the Scheduled Tribe category, in keeping with the way they are classified in Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. This demand was denied because tribal status, as defined in the Constitution’s Fifth Schedule, involves identifiable characteristics such as lifestyle, culture, inaccessibility and backwardness, and not just economic underdevelopment. Since then, the largely pastoral community has pressed for reservations under a separate backward class category, arguing that inclusion of Jats in the OBC list has crowded Gujjars out of the benefits of reservations. Clearly, the decision to accommodate a demand from one politically dominant community (Jats) has come to haunt administrators in the State as this has fanned Gujjar agitations on and off. Multiple commissions appointed by State governments have recommended the implementation of the 5% quota on the basis of the community’s “extreme” or “most” backward nature. But the lack of adequate data in the absence of a proper socio-economic caste census to prove this has led to the policy’s undoing in judicial orders. More important, the repeated agitations are an indication of the shortfall in adequate, gainful and secure job opportunities in States such as Rajasthan.