

Minorities in India
(11 September, 2021)

Introduction

- The Government has made every section of the society an equal partner of progress with the commitment to “Development with Dignity” “Empowerment without Appeasement” and “Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas” ensuring equal benefits to all sections of the society. Irrespective of his or her caste, religion, region, and community is at the centre of welfare schemes of the Government.
- The Government has been treating all the sections of the society including the Muslims as equal partners of the development process.
- Hence the Minorities in India are flourishing equally with all the other sections of the society with a sense of equality, security, and prosperity.

Constitutional Articles related to Minority and their Classification

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- But Minority is not defined in the Constitution. Constitution recognizes Religious minorities in India and Linguistic minorities in India through Article 29 and Article 30.
- **Article 29:** It provides that any section of the citizens residing in any part of India having a distinct language, script, or culture of its own, shall have the rights of minorities in India to conserve the same. Article 29 is applied to both minorities (religious minorities in India and Linguistic minorities in India) and also the majority. It also includes – rights of minorities in India to agitate for the protection of language. Hence political speeches with respect to this are ok.
- **Article 30:** All minorities shall have the rights of minorities in India to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. Article 30 recognises only Religious minorities in India and Linguistic minorities in India (not the majority). It includes the rights of minorities in India to impart education to their children in their own language.
- **Article 350-B:** Originally, the Constitution of India did not make any provision with respect to the Special Officer for Linguistic minorities in India. However, the 7th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1956 inserted Article 350-B in the Constitution. It provides for a Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities appointed by the President of India. It would be the duty of the Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under the Constitution.
- Currently, the Linguistic minorities in India are identified on a state-wise basis thus determined by the state government whereas Religious minorities in India are determined by the Central Government.
- Supreme Court has dismissed a plea seeking guidelines to “identify and define” religious minorities in every State to protect their culture and interests. The petition sought to recognise Hindus as minorities in the States where they are low in population.

Ministry of Minority Affairs

- The Ministry of Minority Affairs is entrusted with the work related to the improvement of the socio-economic condition of the minority communities through affirmative action and inclusive development efforts so that every citizen has an equal opportunity to participate actively in building a vibrant nation.
- The Department Personnel & Training does not maintain separate community-wise data on recruitment.
- This Ministry implements various schemes with the objective to increase the participation of the disadvantaged/underprivileged children/candidates of notified minority communities and to improve the level of education, participation in employment, skill and entrepreneurship development,

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reducing deficiencies in civic amenities or infrastructure are implemented by this Ministry.

National Commission for Minorities (NCM)

- Ministry of Home Affairs established the National Minorities Commission of India in a resolution on January 12, 1978. Once the National Commission for Minorities Act was enacted in 1992, the Minorities Commission became a statutory body and was renamed as **National Commission for Minorities**.
- NCM consist of a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, and five Members. The five Members including the Chairperson shall be from amongst the minority communities.
- The act (not Constitution) defines a minority as “a community notified as such by the Central government.”
- To read the complete Article on NCM: [Click here](#)

Who are minorities in India?

- Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jain, and Zoroastrians (Parsis) have been notified as minority communities under Section 2 (c) of the National Commission for Minorities Act. 1992.
- As per the Census 2011, the percentage of minorities in the country is about 19.3% of the total population of the country.
- The population of Muslims are 14.2%; Christians 2.3%; Sikhs 1.7%, Buddhists 0.7%, Jain 0.4% and Parsis 0.006%.



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Government Schemes for the Empowerment of Minorities

Educational Empowerment

- **Scholarship Schemes**- Pre-Matric Scholarship, Post-Matric Scholarship and Merit-cum-Means based Scholarship. During the last 7 years, more than 4.52 crore beneficiaries have been provided different scholarships through the National Scholarship Portal (NSP) and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) out of which more than 53% of beneficiaries are female.
- **Maulana Azad National Fellowship Scheme** provides financial assistance to students from notified minority communities and whose annual income is below Rs. 6.0 lakh per annum from all sources, to pursue higher education such as M.Phil and Ph.D.
- In addition, the **Maulana Azad Education Founda** implements the scheme viz. Begum Hazrat Mahal National Scholarship for meritorious girls belonging to notified minority communities studying in Classes IX to XII.
- **Nava Savera** – Free Coaching and Allied Scheme which aims to enhance skills and knowledge of students and candidates from notified minority to get employment in Government Sector/ Public Sector Undertaking, jobs in the private sector, and admission in reputed institutions in technical and professional courses at under-graduate and post-graduate levels. During the last seven years, about 69,500 candidates have benefitted from the coaching scheme of this Ministry.
- **Nai Udaan** - Support for notified students of the minority community in India, on clearing Prelims conducted by Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), State Public Service Commission (PSC) Staff Selection Commission (SSC), etc.

Economic Empowerment

- **Seekho Aur Kamao (Learn & Earn)** : It is a skill development initiative for minorities and aims to upgrade the skills of minority youth in various modern/traditional skills depending upon their qualification, present economic trends, and market potential, which can earn them employment or make them suitably skilled to go for self-employment. Since 2014-15 approx. 3.92 lakh persons have been benefitted from this employment-oriented program.
- A mission has been launched by the Ministry of Minority Affairs under “**Upgrading the Skill and Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development (USTTAD)**” scheme to give an effective platform to minority artisans and culinary experts from across the country to showcase and market their finest handicraft and exquisitely crafted products through “Hunar Haats” organized by the Ministry.
- Ministry has engaged institutions of national repute namely, National Institute

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of Fashion Technology (NIFT), National Institute of Design (NID), and Indian Institute of Packaging (IIP) to work in various craft clusters for design intervention, product range development, packaging, exhibitions and brand building, etc. So far, Ministry has organised **28 “Hunar Haats”** in which more than 5.5 lakhs artisans and people associated with them have been provided employment and employment opportunities, out of which more than 50% beneficiaries are women.

- **Nai Manzil** - A scheme to provide education and skill training to the youth from minority communities.
- **Gharib Nawaz Employment Training Programme** provides short-term job-oriented skill development courses to youths belonging to minority communities.
- **National Minorities Development Finance Corporation (NMDFC) Loan Schemes** provide concessional loans for self-employment and income-generating activities for the socio-economic development of the ‘backward sections’ amongst the notified minorities.

Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK)

- In addition, another scheme namely Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK) is implemented by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, which aims to improve the socio-economic conditions and basic amenities in the identified Minority Concentration Areas.
- The major projects approved under PMJVK are in sectors of education, health, and skill, and include Residential Schools, School buildings, Hostels, Degree Colleges, ITIs, Polytechnics, Smart Class Rooms, Sadbhav Mandaps, Health Centres, Skill Centres, Sports facilities, Drinking Water facilities, sanitation facilities, etc.
- In the last 7 years, under the “Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram” (PMJVK) more than 43 thousand basic infrastructure projects have been created such as residential schools, new schools, colleges, hostels, community centers, common service centers, ITIs, Polytechnics, Girls Hostels, Sadbhava Mandaps, Hunar Hubs, Smart Class Rooms, etc in identified Minority concentrated areas across the country.

Prime Minister's New 15 Point Programme

- Further, under the Prime Minister's New 15 Point Programme for the welfare of minorities, the Government ensures that the benefits of various government schemes for the underprivileged reach the disadvantaged and vulnerable sections of the minority communities also.
- Under the programme, it is provisioned that, wherever possible, 15% of targets and outlays under various schemes should be earmarked for



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minorities.

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