

A Prime Minister's High Level Committee was constituted by the Government of India (Prime Minister's Office/Secretariat) in March 2005 under the chairmanship of Justice Rajinder Sachar to prepare a report on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community of India. The Committee submitted its report in November, 2006.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE

As it has been noted, there is lack of authentic information about the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community of India which comes in the way of planning, formulating and implementing specific interventions, policies and programmes to address the issues relating to the socio-economic backwardness of this community. The Government has constituted a high level committee to prepare a comprehensive report covering these aspects.

The terms of reference of the above High Level Committee (HLC) are as follows:

- (1) The HLC will prepare a report on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community of India.
- (2) More specifically, the HLC will:
 - (a) Obtain relevant information from departments/agencies of the Central and state governments and also conduct an intensive literature survey to identify published data, articles and research on relative social, economic and educational status of Muslims in India at the state, regional and district levels, to address, *inter alia*, the following questions:
 - (i) In which states, regions, districts and blocks do Muslims of India mostly live?
 - (ii) What is the geographical pattern of their economic activity, i.e., what do they mostly do for a living in various states, regions and districts?
 - (iii) What are their asset bases and income levels relative to other groups across various states and regions?
 - (iv) What is the level of their socio-economic development in terms of relevant indicators such as literacy rate, dropout rate, maternal mortality rate (MMR), infant mortality rate (IMR) etc.? How does this compare with other communities in various states?
 - (v) What is their relative share in public and private sector employment? Does it vary across states and what is the pattern of such variation? Is the share in employment in proportion to their population in various states? If not, what are the hurdles?
 - (vi) What is the proportion of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) from the Muslim

community in the total OBC population in various states? Are the Muslim OBCs listed in the comprehensive list of OBCs prepared by the National and State Backward Classes Commissions and adopted by the Central and state governments for reservation for various purposes? What is the share of Muslim OBCs in the total public sector employment for OBCs in the Centre and in various states in various years?

- (vii) Does the Muslim community have adequate access to education and health services, municipal infrastructure, bank credit and other services provided by Government/public sector entities? How does this compare to the access enjoyed by other communities in various states? What is the level of social infrastructure (schools, health centers, Integrated Child Development Service Centers, etc.) located in areas of Muslim concentration in comparison to the general level of such infrastructure in various states?
- (b) Consolidate, collate and analyse the above information/literature to identify areas of intervention by Government to address relevant issues relating to the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community.

FINDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee found that while there is considerable variation in the conditions of Muslims across states, (and among the Muslims, those who identified themselves as OBCs and others), the community exhibits deficits and deprivation in practically all dimensions of development. In fact, by and large, Muslims rank somewhat above SCs/STs but below Hindu-OBCs, Other Minorities and Hindu-General (mostly upper castes) in almost all indicators considered. Among the states that have large Muslim populations, the situation is particularly grave in the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Assam. In addition to the 'development deficit', the perception among Muslims, that they are discriminated against and excluded, is widespread. This exacerbates the problem.

The educational, economic and social conditions of Muslims as reflected by the Committee report are mentioned below.

1. Muslims have the highest rate of stunting and second-highest rate of underweight children.
2. 25% Muslim children in the 6-14 years age group have either never attended school or have dropped out.
3. Only one out of every 25 undergraduate and 50 postgraduate students in premier colleges is a Muslim.
4. Only about 4% of all Muslim students are enrolled in madarsas.
5. Workforce participation rate among Muslim women is only 25%. In rural areas, 29% of Muslim women participate in the workforce as compared to 70% of Hindu women.
6. 61% of the total Muslim workers are self-employed as against 55% of Hindu workers. 73% of Muslim women are self-employed as compared to 60% for Hindus.
7. Only about 27% of the Muslim workers in urban areas are engaged in regular work as compared to 40% SC/ST, 36% OBC and 49% Hindu upper caste workers.
8. Less than 24% of Muslim regular workers are employed in the public sector or in government

jobs as compared to 39% regular SC/ST workers, 37% Hindu upper caste workers and 30% OBC workers.

9. The share of Muslim male workers engaged in street vending (especially without any fixed location) is 12% as against the national average of less than 8%.
10. The share of Muslims in Public Order and Safety Activities at the Central Government level is only about 6%. Hindu upper caste workers have a share of 42% and both SCs/STs and OBCs have 23% share each.
11. The share of Muslims among defence workers is only 4%.
12. Compared to other regular workers, a much larger proportion of Muslim regular workers have no written contract (73%, against 52% for Hindu upper caste and 63% each for Hindu-OBCs and SCs/STs) and no social security benefit (71% against the national average of 55%).

Interestingly, despite such deficits, the Muslim community has the following positive points:

1. The Muslim population shows an increasingly better sex-ratio compared with other socio-religious communities.
2. Infant and childhood mortality among Muslims is slightly lower than the average.
3. The life expectancy for Muslims is higher than average by about one year.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

1. Creation of a National Data Bank (NDB) where all relevant data for various socio-religious communities (SRCs) are maintained.
2. Setting up of an autonomous Assessment and Monitoring Authority (AMA) to evaluate the extent of development benefits which accrue to different SRCs through various programmes.
3. While equity in the implementation of programmes and better participation of the community in the development process would gradually eliminate the perception of discrimination, there is a need to strengthen the legal provisions to eliminate such cases.
4. An Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) should be constituted by the government to look into the grievances of the deprived groups.
5. Appropriate state level laws can be enacted to ensure minority representation in local bodies.
6. Anomalies should be eliminated with respect to reserved constituencies under the delimitation schemes.
7. The idea of providing certain incentives to a 'diversity index' should be explored. A wide variety of incentives can be linked to this index so as to ensure equal opportunity to all SRCs in the areas of education, government and private employment and housing.
8. In order to respect and sustain diversity in the development and implementation of innovative programmes or in the provision of services, the relevant functionaries should be sensitive to the need for diversity and the problems associated with social exclusion.
9. A process of evaluating the content of the school text books needs to be initiated to purge them of explicit and implicit content that may impart inappropriate social values, especially religious intolerance.

10. Government schools of a high standard should be set up in all areas of Muslim concentration.
11. Exclusive schools for girls should be set up, particularly for the 9-12 standards.
12. Given the constitutional commitment to provide primary education in the child's mother tongue, the state is required to run Urdu medium schools.
13. The pre-entry qualification for admission to ITIs should be reduced to Class VIII.
14. The University Grants Commission (UGC) should be encouraged to evolve a system where part of the allocation to colleges and universities is linked to the diversity within the student population.
15. To facilitate admissions to the 'most backward' amongst all the SRCs in the regular universities and autonomous colleges, alternate admission criteria need to be evolved.
16. Providing hostel facilities at reasonable costs for students from minorities should be taken up on a priority basis.
17. Teacher training should compulsorily include in its curriculum components which introduce the importance of diversity/plurality within the country and sensitise teachers towards the needs and aspirations of Muslims and other marginalised communities.
18. Urdu should be introduced as an optional subject in all government and government-aided schools in states having a substantial Urdu speaking population.
19. Work out mechanisms whereby madarasas can be linked with a higher secondary school board so that students wanting to shift to regular/mainstream education can do so after having passed from a madarsa.
20. Degrees from madarasas should be recognised for eligibility in competitive examinations such as the civil services, banks, defense services and other such examinations.
21. Access to Muslims in Priority Sector Bank Advances should be promoted and enhanced.
22. Banks should be incentivised for opening more branches in Muslim concentration areas.
23. Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) should set aside a fund for training for minorities under its Entrepreneurial Development Programme.
24. A policy to enhance the participation of minorities in the micro-credit schemes of National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD) should be laid down.
25. It is desirable to have experts drawn from the Muslim community on relevant interview panels and boards. This practice is already in vogue in the case of SCs/STs.
26. All districts with more than 25 per cent Muslim population should be brought under the Prime Minister's 15-Point Programme. A special assistance package for the development of these districts should be launched.
27. There should be transparency in information about minorities in all activities.
28. Detailed data should be collected regularly on the participation of different SRCs in government programmes, both at the state and the Central level.
29. The Central Government should introduce a few schemes with large outlays for welfare of minorities with an equitable provision for Muslims.
30. Financial and other support should be provided to initiatives built around occupations where Muslims are concentrated, and that have growth potential.
31. Location of ITIs, polytechnics and other institutions that provide skill training to non-

matriculates need to be located in areas/clusters which have large concentrations of Muslim population.

32. It is desirable to have a mandated social security system for the self-employed persons in the informal sector, especially the home-based workers.
33. Efforts should be made to increase the employment share of Muslims amongst the teaching community, health workers, police personnel, bank employees and so on.
34. The registration of trusts set up by the Muslim community, such as Wakf institutions and mosque committees should be facilitated.