

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT
(2020 - 21)**

(SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)

MINISTRY OF MINORITY AFFAIRS

[Action taken by the Government on the observations/recommendations contained in the Twenty Second-Report of the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants (2021-22) of the Ministry of Minority Affairs]

TWENTY-FIFTH REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

August, 2021/Sravana, 1943 (Saka)

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Presented to Lok Sabha on 06.08.2021

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 06.08.2021



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

August, 2021/Sravana, 1943 (Saka)

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SECRETARIAT

1. Smt. Anita B. Panda - Joint Secretary
2. Smt. Mamta Kemwal - Director
3. Shri Krishendra Kumar - Deputy Secretariat
4. Smt. Shashi Bisht - Assistant Executive Officer

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson, Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (2020-21) having been authorized by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, do present this Twenty-fifth Report on the action taken by the Government on the observations/recommendations contained in the Twenty-second Report of the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2021-22)' of the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

2. The Twenty-second Report was presented to Lok Sabha and laid in Rajya Sabha on 16th March, 2021. The Ministry of Minority Affairs furnished their replies indicating action taken on the observations/recommendations contained therein that Report on 1st June, 2021. The Report was considered and adopted by the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment at their sitting held on 05 August, 2021.

3. An analysis of the action taken by Government on the recommendations contained in the Twenty-second Report of the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) is given in *Appendix*.

4. For facility of reference, observations/recommendations/comments of the Committee have been printed in thick type in the body of this Report.

NEW DELHI;
05 August, 2021
13 Sravana, 1943 (Saka)

RAMA DEVI
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on
Social Justice and
Empowerment

CHAPTER - I

REPORT

1.1 This Report of the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment deals with the action taken by the Government on the observations/recommendations contained in the Twenty-second Report of the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on Demands for Grants 2021-22 pertaining to the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

1.2 The Twenty-second Report was presented to Lok Sabha and laid in Rajya Sabha on 16.03.2021. It contained 5 observations/recommendations. Replies of Government in respect of all the observations/recommendations have been examined and are categorized as under: -

- (i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government :
Paragraph Nos. 5.7 and 6.12.

(Total :2-Chapter-II)

- (ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the replies of the Government :
Paragraph No. - 4.11

(Total :1 -Chapter-III)

- (iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted and which require reiteration:
Paragraph No. -Nil

(Total: Nil -Chapter-IV)

- (iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government are of interim in nature:
Paragraph No. - 2.10 and 3.11.

(Total : 2 - Chapter- V)

1.3 **The Committee desire that action taken notes on the recommendations contained in Chapter-I and final action taken notes in respect of the recommendations contained in Chapter-V of this Report may be furnished to them at the earliest and in any case not later than three months of the presentation of this Report.**

1.4 The Committee will now deal with the replies received from the Government which merit comments.

A. Budgetary Provisions and Utilization under Scholarship component

Recommendation (Sl. No. 1, Para 2.10)

1.5 The Committee, in their Twenty-second Report, had recommended as under:-

“The Committee are surprised to note that the Ministry was not able to spend their Budgetary allocation fully during 2020-21 despite it being reduced by more than ₹1000 crore at the RE stage from Rs 5029.00 to Rs 4005.00, due to slow pace of expenditure in scholarship component. It reportedly happened as States/UTs could not complete re-verification process. The Committee, although, were informed that the said reduction was not for the Scholarship Schemes but for other Schemes of the Ministry, nonetheless feel that as compared to other Ministries implementing similar Scholarship Schemes, the Ministry of Minority Affairs has stood way behind in utilizing the allotted funds. This surely calls for some introspection. While the Ministry have convinced that they would be able to utilize their allocation fully during the remaining period of the Financial Year 2020-21, the Committee are skeptical about the same since the trend of previous years indicates that except under the pre-matric Scholarship Scheme, the Ministry always had funds remaining underutilized at the end of the year for the other two Schemes. The Committee are unable to comprehend as to how the Ministry would accomplish objectives of these Schemes unless all States/UTs complete their processes of re-verification in a very short time, which, in all probability, is not likely to happen. While the Ministry have furnished information on the actual number of beneficiaries exceeding the targets in previous years there is nil information for 2020-21. The Committee would, therefore, like to be apprised of the position in 2020-21 at the action taken stage. As per the 15th Finance Commission Report, all the Schemes are likely to be reviewed for the next 5 years, hence, the Committee recommend that the monthly/quarterly expenditure plan of the Ministry for the year 2021-22 must also be executed strictly so that they are able to justify their Schemes and project the correct requirement of funds at RE stage too.”

1.6 The Ministry of Minority Affairs, in their action taken reply, have stated as follows:-

“Budget Estimate 2020-21 was reduced from ₹5029 crore to ₹4005 crore at Revised Estimate 2020-21 stage. With the concerted efforts and constant monitoring at highest level an amount of ₹3998.57 crore i.e 99.84 % of RE of ₹4005 crore was booked under various schemes of the Ministry during 2020-21.

Against the allocation of ₹ 2265 crore in 2020-21 for the 3 scholarship schemes viz., Pre-Matric, Post-Matric and Merit-cum-Means based Scholarship Schemes the Ministry has booked a total expenditure of ₹ 2234.70crore i.e. 98.66% of the allocated budget. The Scheme-wise expenditure details for FY 2020-21 are as under:

Scheme	B.E. (In ₹ Cr.)	R.E. (In ₹ Cr.)	Expenditure (In ₹ Cr.)
Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme	1330.00	1330.00	1325.55
Post Matric Scholarship Scheme	535.00	535.00	512.81
Merit-cum-Means based Scholarship Scheme	400.00	400.00	396.34
Total	2265.00	2265.00	2234.70

It is further stated that the number of scholarships under the fresh category in each of the three schemes' is fixed as per the State/UT wise and community wise quota. However there is no quota for renewal scholarships and all eligible beneficiaries are entitled for renewal scholarship subject to verification of their applications. As far as the physical target is concerned, despite disruptions arising out of the COVID pandemic the targets under the 'fresh' category have largely been achieved and maximum numbers of eligible and genuine applicants have also covered under the 'renewal' category of these Schemes. The remaining applicants whose applications have been verified and who have made it to the merit list under the 'fresh' category but could not be paid due to technical reasons like payment failure, delay in bank validation or delay by the States in digitally signing of the payment files will be paid within the first quarter of the succeeding academic year i.e. 2021-22 after rectification/ signing of payment files by the States. The Scheme-wise details of the number of beneficiaries covered in FY 2020-21 are as under:

Scheme	Target (Fresh)	*Total Scholarships Sanctioned (As on 31.03.2021)
Pre-Matric	3000004	5046292
Post Matric	499999	648133
MCM	60000	117614
Total	3560000	5812039

*includes renewals"

1.7 Keeping in view the slow pace of expenditure and resultant underutilisation of Budgetary allocation in the Post-Matric and Merit-cum-Means Scholarship Schemes component, and that too, despite a reduction of ₹1000 crore at RE stage, during the previous year, the Committee had desired to be informed of the position of the number of actual beneficiaries for 2020-21 as there was nil information during the examination of Demands for Grants. The Committee are now happy to note from the action taken reply that the Ministry has reportedly achieved the targets as it has been informed that against the target of fresh 3560000 scholarships in 2020-21, the number of scholarships sanctioned, under 'fresh' and 'renewal' categories, as on 31.3.2021, is 5812039. At the same time, the Ministry, in their Action Taken Reply, have submitted that under 'Fresh' category some scholarships could not be paid due to technical reasons like payment failure, delay in bank validation or delay by the States in digitally signing of payment files. The Ministry have committed that these scholarships would be paid within the first quarter of the academic year i.e., 2021-22 after rectification/ signing of payment files by the States. As the first quarter has passed, the Committee hope that the payments for these 'fresh' applications has since been completed, and renewal applications timely processed so that the scholarship amount is timely disbursed and education of beneficiaries is not disrupted due to non-payment.

B. Scholarship Schemes

Recommendation (Sl. No.2, Para 3.11)

1.8 The Committee in their Twenty-second Report had recommended as under:-

“Three Central Sector Scholarship Schemes namely Pre-matric, Post-matric and Merit-cum-Means are being implemented by the Ministry of Minority Affairs for six centrally notified minority communities. The Committee are quite disturbed by cases reported about the alleged misappropriation of funds/funds going to fake students under these scholarship schemes for children belonging to underprivileged minorities in six States, which are under investigation/enquiry. In one State, after enquiry, the fraud is stated to have happened due to passwords leak by certain vested interests as well as other loopholes. Taking advantage of illiteracy/lack of awareness among parents and children of minorities is also exploited by such elements. While the Ministry representatives have always been claiming that the system is fail-safe due to all transactions/verifications done online, a dedicated Portal, cash transfer through DBT and similar measures, which are definitely the need of the hour, it is disconcerting for the Committee to observe that such instances of corruption happened. However minuscule, this must have deprived the genuine beneficiaries of Government Scholarship Schemes and may have lead to some children dropping out too being unable to afford the school fee/other expenses. During their evidence, the Ministry representatives informed the Committee about further safety measures under their consideration, for instance, preserving the files of scholarship-holder students for a period of 5 years, creation of an Aadhaar vault in coordination with MeITY, requirement of signatures of School Principals in verification report filed by teacher, at least 2% physical verification, creation of student data bank with the help of Department of School education etc. While the Committee desire the Ministry to plug all identified loopholes in the system, strengthening privacy of data and passwords and reduce all manual interventions, be it school personnel, banking intermediaries, NGOs or unauthorised persons, they are of the strong opinion that the Ministry should also counsel the State Governments to try to reach out to a sample size of beneficiary minority students directly to ascertain that they are not being duped in the pretext of Government scholarships, and that they are actually in receipt, through DBT, of the full amount of the entitled scholarship money for the term, as approved against their names in the Portal. Also the banks should ensure that the accounts of students do not get closed due to non-activity since minority children cannot do regular transactions, because some evaluation studies have shown that the scholarship money gets reverted also due to accounts being inactive/closed. The Committee are convinced that such measures can lead to a major improvement and hence recommend that action should be taken on this aspect. Now, as the COVID-19 vaccination is gaining speed, the Committee opine that the reopening of schools in full capacity and the resultant formalities and verifications etc. for disbursement of scholarships will pick up in the later part of the current Financial year. The Committee reiterate that fraudulent activity by unscrupulous elements in schools, banks, NGOs, VOs, etc., who find ways to circumvent the processes

for their personal gains, must be stopped. In fact, the Committee learn that recently around 8000 NGOs have been delisted by the Government for various shortcomings in their functioning. Hence, the Committee reiterate that the Ministry should ensure that the online portal for scholarships should have enough security features/tools to detect any tampering/fraud in the passwords/codes, in consultation with NIC and persons/ organizations found guilty of malpractices should be removed with immediate effect. The Committee desire to be apprised of the progress in the Ministry's efforts as well as the outcome of the enquiries currently underway in some States on the matter."

1.9 The Ministry of Minority Affairs, in their action taken replies, have stated as under:

"The Ministry has taken various actions/initiatives during FY 2020-21 to strengthen the implementation of the Scholarship Schemes through National Scholarship Portal and issued various preventive measures to be taken by National Scholarship Portal (NSP)-NIC as well as Institute Nodal Officers/District Nodal Officers/State Nodal Officers. As desired by the Committee, the present status of various actions taken by the Ministry on the matter is as under:

- (a) The matter was referred to Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) by the Ministry and a Preliminary Enquiry has been registered by them on the subject on 11th November 2020. The investigation report is awaited in this Ministry.
- (b) The present status of the actions taken by the NSP-NIC as well as States/UTs are as under, which refers to the successful implementation of some of the directives issued by the Ministry:
 - All verified applications till 12.01.2021 were reverted for re-verification and all such applications have been successfully re-verified within the stipulated timeline.
 - NSP has provided previous year's information and data from U-DISE/ AISHE to serve as reference materials for verification by Institute Nodal Officers (INO) and District/State/UT Nodal Officers (DNO/SNO).
 - Validation of date of birth and gender in addition to name of applicants through Aadhaar demographic authentication has been done.
 - All DNOs and more than 90% INOs have been re-verified.
 - Doubtful applications were identified with red flags by NSP to ensure and facilitate re-verification.
 - The Ministry is also exploring to engage the services of Common Service Centre (CSC) to facilitate Aadhaar authenticated

applications under Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme and Centre of Excellence for Data Analytics (CEDA) for data analytics in FY 2020-21.

(c) The following instructions have been issued by the Ministry to States/UTs to tighten the verification process:

- INO will maintain a hard file of applications and supporting documents, class-wise and academic year-wise, for inspection by district level and other authorities at any time.
- INO has to be an employee of the School/Institution.
- SNOs/DNOs to undertake mandatory physical verification of institutions and applicants as well as 2% of verified applications and furnish a report.
- Head of Institution to certify the list of applications verified by INO and send it to DNO/SNO for L 2 verification. NSP has created a separate login for Head of the Institution.
- Schools/Institutions will have to display the list of beneficiaries on the notice board and also to present the list of beneficiaries with final amount before the School Management Committee and obtain the signature of the student.

(d) Present status of the reports, sent by the five States where the investigation is under way, is as under:

- Report of Chhattisgarh State: The report says that it has been found that all alleged beneficiaries are genuine and assures no fraudulent incident.
- Report of Assam State: The investigation is under process with CID. Additional data required by them has been provided by MoMA. Interim/Final report in this matter is awaited.
- Report of Punjab State: The matter is under examination by S.S.P. Hoshiarpur.
- Report of Bihar State: The State has instructed District Magistrates of 9 concerned districts to enquire and investigate alleged cases. FIR has been lodged in Gaya and Saharsa Districts.
- Report of Jharkhand State: Matter has been handed over to Anticorruption Bureau (ACB) of State. Interim/Final report in this matter is awaited.

Besides, DBT Mission, Cabinet Secretariat and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) have also been apprised of these recommendations and the necessary directions have been issued by DBT Mission to NSP-NIC for rigorous implementation of these measures. DBT Mission, Cabinet Secretariat has also issued some common instructions/guidelines to be followed by all Ministries/Departments implementing their Schemes through NSP Portal.

It is further submitted that since NIC maintains the Portal and it is under the administrative control of DBT Mission, Cabinet Secretariat – the recommendations of the Committee will be forwarded to Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) as well as the DBT Mission Cabinet Secretariat for appropriate action.”

1.10 The Committee, in their earlier recommendation, had expressed concern over the cases of fake beneficiaries of scholarships being reported from many States and had, accordingly, given concrete suggestions so that the present system is strengthened further to avoid recurrence of such instances. The Committee feel that various actions/initiatives taken/envisaged by the Ministry during Financial Year 2020-21 to strengthen the implementation of the Scholarship Schemes through National Scholarship Portal and various preventive measures issued for National Scholarship Portal - NIC, data agencies as well as Institute Nodal Officers/District Nodal Officers/State Nodal Officers, are steps in the right direction and once completed, should address loopholes in the system. However, the Committee is unhappy with the slow pace of progress in the inquiry being conducted in the cases reported about the alleged misappropriation of funds/funds going to fake beneficiaries under scholarship schemes in some States i.e. Assam, Punjab, Bihar, and Jharkhand where the investigations/enquiries are under way and Interim/Final reports are still awaited. The Committee, therefore, urge the Ministry to vigorously pursue with these States so that the genuine students do not suffer. The Committee are also disappointed to note the Ministry's silence on the issue of deactivation of Bank accounts of some of the beneficiary students. They, therefore, reiterate that the Ministry should resolve the issue so that the Bank accounts of scholarship beneficiaries are not closed in the absence of regular transaction and the scholarship money do not get reverted due to accounts being inactive/closed.

C. NAI MANZIL

Recommendation (Sl. No.4, Para 5.7)

1.11 The Committee, in their Twenty-second Report, had recommended as under:-

“The Committee find that the Nai Manzil Scheme aims to benefit the minority youths including girl students in the age group of 17 to 35 years who do not have a formal school leaving certificate i.e., those in the category of school dropouts or educated in the community education initiatives including Madarsas, who are not only education and skill certified but also placed in jobs. The Committee are disappointed to note that despite aid from the World Bank, the Scheme has been lagging mainly due to non-availability of job opportunities in the vicinity of the beneficiaries particularly for girls who are not willing to take up jobs outside. It is disappointing that out of 98311 persons enrolled, only 26312 persons have got job placement. The Committee, therefore, desire that the skill training programme may include on-line work, which can be done right from the home itself, particularly for girls from minority communities. The efforts to popularize Nai Manzil Scheme may be made through local bodies and local public representatives in order to convince the communities about benefits of sending their youth for education/skill training. Effective monitoring and audit would instill confidence further.”

1.12 The Ministry of Minority Affairs, in their action taken reply, have submitted as under:

i. Ministry has tied up with two employment promoting startups APNA & CSR Box, these have been on boarded to capacity build the Project Implementing Agencies to improve the placements.

ii. The directives have also been issued to PIAs in pursuance of the recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee in popularizing the scheme by highlighting events such as convocation/awarding of certificate to the trainees by inviting the Hon'ble Members of Parliament, Legislators, Local Authorities, Media and Influencers.

iii. A mentorship model has been devised involving the PMU members to engage minutely and handhold the PIAs to increase the efficiency of outputs and outcomes of the interventions reach.”

1.13 The Committee note from the reply of the Ministry that they have tied up with two employment promoting startups APNA & CSR Box to capacity build the Project Implementing Agencies to improve the placements. They, further note, that a mentorship model has been devised involving the PMU members to engage minutely and handhold the PIAs to increase the efficiency of outputs and outcomes of the interventions reach. The Committee however, find that the reply does not mention anything about inclusion of on-line work in the skill training programme with PIAs for improving the placement. The Committee would, therefore, like to re-emphasize the need to include on-line work in the skill training programme so that beneficiaries particularly girls who are not willing to take up jobs outside can get job opportunities within their vicinity under the scheme. It is most relevant under the prevailing situation of COVID-19 pandemic which necessitates social distancing. The Committee would also like the Ministry to develop a mechanism to monitor the role of APNA and CSR BOX and provide the Committee with the number of jobs provided after APNA and CSR Box have been associated in Nai Manzil Scheme.

CHAPTER – II

Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government

Recommendation (Para 5.7)

2.1 The Committee find that the Nai Manzil Scheme aims to benefit the minority youths including girl students in the age group of 17 to 35 years who do not have a formal school leaving certificate i.e., those in the category of school dropouts or educated in the community education initiatives including Madarsas, who are not only education and skill certified but also placed in jobs. The Committee are disappointed to note that despite aid from the World Bank, the Scheme has been lagging mainly due to non-availability of job opportunities in the vicinity of the beneficiaries particularly for girls who are not willing to take up jobs outside. It is disappointing that out of 98311 persons enrolled, only 26312 persons have got job placement. The Committee, therefore, desire that the skill training programme may include on-line work, which can be done right from the home itself, particularly for girls from minority communities. The efforts to popularize Nai Manzil Scheme may be made through local bodies and local public representatives in order to convince the communities about benefits of sending their youth for education/skill training. Effective monitoring and audit would instill confidence further.

Reply of the Government

- 2.2 i. Ministry has tied up with two employment promoting startups APNA & CSR Box, these have been onboarded to capacity build the Project Implementing Agencies to improve the placements.
- ii. The directives have also been issued to PIAs in pursuance of the recommendation of the Hon'ble Committee in popularizing the scheme by highlighting events such as convocation/awarding of certificate to the trainees

by inviting the Hon'ble Members of Parliament, Legislators, Local Authorities, Media and Influencers.

- iii. A mentorship model has been devised involving the PMU members to engage minutely and handhold the PIAs to increase the efficiency of outputs and outcomes of the interventions reach.

(Ministry of Minority Affairs OM No.G-20014/2/2021-Budget dated 01st June, 2021)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.13 of Chapter-I of the Report)

Recommendation (Para 6.12)

2.3 The Committee note that the actual expenditure on 'Seekho aur Kamao Scheme' was substantially less in comparison to the allocation during last three years. Further the Ministry do not have the data of number of placements after training on SAK portal of the same period, as according to them, three years are required to complete the whole process. The Committee feel that the time period of three years is too long for training and giving employment to the minority youth in the modern times where market trends are very dynamic. Hence, the Ministry should consider restructuring skill programmes in consultation of PIAs to curtail the training period and to get the youth jobs as early as possible even in the private sector/local entrepreneurs etc. so that the objectives of the Scheme for minority youth is achieved. The Committee find that changing modalities from MES to NSQF has proved to be a setback for several PIAs who found the procedures cumbersome hence the Committee feel that the Ministry should, therefore, consider the larger interest of the beneficiaries of the Scheme before making any drastic changes in the modalities as it disrupts the entire skill training ecosystem. The Committee strongly feel that the Scheme needs to be

streamlined by synchronizing it at different levels. The Committee would, therefore, like to recommend an evaluation study/social audit to assess the impact and effectiveness of the Scheme to identify the flaws of the Scheme and to ensure that the Budgetary allocation is fully utilized.

Reply of the Government

- 2.4 i. The pendency in payments were due to covid pandemic situation since March, 2020 and systemic issues, which have been taken cognizance of and a mechanism has been devised of getting the centers inspected, random sampling of the trainees and then clearing of the dues on the basis of merit of cases. Apart from this training were not held and assessments were not done since March 2020 due to Covid situation.
- ii. The Ministry has already been working on the same and has written to MSDE in May 2021 to allow online assessments for pending cases with over 3 lakh trainees including 1 lakh in medical job roles that can be immediately deployed as covid warriors.
- iii. The Ministry is committed in creating employable human resource to best utilize the demographic dividend of India, NSQF being the agreed & recommended standard of skilling – The Ministry will take extra caution in empanelling, monitoring and handholding during the implementation of the scheme.
- iv. Moreover shifting from MES to NSQF is a policy decision taken by Govt of India and all skilling schemes of Govt of India have to comply with the standards prescribed by Common norms and be NSQF compliant. However, Committee's observations are being communicated to Ministry of Skill Development for appropriate action.
- v. The Ministry is deploying a PMU with experts in the field of M&E, Livelihoods, Social Behavioral Change Communications, MIS, Finance and IT to be placed within the Ministry and handhold the PIAs to improve the quality of implementation of the Scheme.

- vi. The Third party evaluation of the scheme has been done by MDI, Gurgaon. The process of reformulating the Scheme has already been initiated based on recommendations of the impact and evaluation study. Further complying to the recommendation of the committee, a mobile app has been developed to capture feedback directly from the beneficiaries. Stakeholder consultations are also being carried out to identify problem areas and corrective measures to improve the placements.

(Ministry of Minority Affairs OM No.G-20014/2/2021-Budget dated 01st June, 2021)

CHAPTER – III

Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the replies of the Government

Recommendation (Para 4.11)

3.1 PMJVK is a significant Scheme, being under the National Development Agenda, where projects to provide basic infrastructure/amenities for minority areas like toilets, AWCs, Drinking water/ handpumps, classrooms, etc. are received from States/UTs and then sanctioned by an Empowered Committee in the Ministry of Minority Affairs after obtaining comments from respective line Ministries. The Committee are perturbed to note that the Ministry may not be able to consider several proposals received from States/UTs during the year 2021-22 under PMJVK as the budgetary allocation has been reduced from Rs 1600 crore to Rs 971.38 crore in the year 2020-21 at RE stage. Further, several proposals, having Central share component of Rs 1113 crore, are yet to be considered by the Empowered Committee of the Ministry. The Committee are also disturbed with the fact that Utilization Certificates for a staggering amount of Rs 3610.82 crore released upto March, 2019 are pending and some States have proposed to surrender projects involving share of Rs 275.77 crore. The Committee cannot but conclude that the Ministry have not been able to shoulder the huge responsibility of this ambitious Scheme. While the Ministry would be requesting for more funds at RE stage to be released to fill the gap in the next Financial Year i.e. 2021-22, they are also statedly seeking an outlay of Rs 2185 crore for the year 2021-22. The Committee feel that apart from changed format for UCs, the Ministry should find ways to speed up the procedural aspects, particularly seeking comments from line Ministries on the project proposals as this could be quite a time-consuming process. Overall, an appropriate mechanism needs to be developed

to keep a track of the proposals so that there is no delay either in getting Utilization Certificates but also in timely consideration and sanction of the projects.

Reply of the Government

3.2 The Ministry of Minority Affairs, during the year 2020-21, has under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK) considered proposals received from the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Manipur, Mizoram, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Nagaland, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand and sanctioned projects to the tune of Rs. 1698.40 crore having Central Share of Rs. 1231.92 crore. Rs. 1091.93 crore was released in 2020-21 as Central Share for the projects sanctioned in 2020-21 and also towards second and third installments for the earlier sanctioned projects. Further, Rs. 125.15 crore is due to be released in 2021-22 as first installment of Central Share for the projects sanctioned in 2020-21. All the proposals received from the States under PMJVK were considered by the Ministry except for the proposals received in the month of Feb - March 2021 from the States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal where Assembly elections were declared and Model Code of Conduct had come into play. Proposals received from these three States will be considered in the current FY 2021-22.

With regard to pending UCs, it is submitted that the PMJVK is an infrastructure development programme wherein the type of projects sanctioned include civil construction like School Buildings, College Buildings, ITIs, Polytechnics, Common Service Centres, Hospitals, Health Centres, Sports Stadiums etc. The time taken for construction/completion of these projects vary from project to project depending upon a number of factors like size of the building, clearances of other concerned State departments, topography of land, release of state share of funds, tendering/bidding

process etc. Generally, the projects take about 2-3 years time for completion of construction. The Central Share of funds for the projects are released in two/three installments. The second installment is released only after 100% utilisation of the first installment. Similarly, third installment is released only after 100% utilisation of the second installment. Therefore, keeping in view the construction period, at any given point of time, there would be funds in the process of utilisation and will be shown as UC pending. However, it is submitted that the Ministry constantly pursues with the States/UTs for liquidation of UCs. Such follow up is done through review meetings conducted by the Empowered Committee/Screening Committee with the State authorities, through correspondences, discussions, visit by officers of the Ministry etc. With a view to streamline and reduce pendency of UCs, it was decided in consultation with the Ministry of Finance to request the States with large UC pendency to identify the projects which have become un-viable due to cost escalation or for other reasons like land litigation etc and propose dropping of such projects. The States were also requested to propose alternate projects against the dropped projects for consideration of the Ministry. The submission of projects for dropping by the States of UP, Bihar and Rajasthan is a result of such an effort by the Ministry. This will help in liquidating pending UCs and at the same time utilise the blocked funds for construction of new projects.

The revision of UC format, as observed by the Committee, is only a step towards better monitoring of funds particularly the release and utilisation of State share. With a view to streamline receiving of comments from the line Ministries, the Ministry of Minority Affairs pursue the matter on a regular basis with the concerned officers and also invite the line Ministry to give their comments during the Empowered

Committee meetings. There is no delay in consideration of projects due to comments from the line Ministries.

As regards development of an appropriate mechanism to keep a track of the projects, there does exist a robust mechanism under the PMJVK scheme. Besides the normal chain of monitoring through the Block Level Committee, District Level Committee and State Level Committee, the Ministry continuously reviews the progress of construction and commissioning of sanctioned projects. The monitoring mechanism is further been strengthened by inclusion of Online Monitoring Module and Geo-tagging of all sanctioned projects.

(Ministry of Minority Affairs OM No.G-20014/2/2021-Budget dated 01st June, 2021)

CHAPTER – IV

Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted and which require reiteration

-NIL-

CHAPTER – V

Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government are interim in nature

Recommendation (Para 2.10)

5.1 The Committee are surprised to note that the Ministry was not able to spend their Budgetary allocation fully during 2020-21 despite it being reduced by more than Rs.1000 crore at the RE stage from Rs 5029.00 to Rs 4005.00, due to slow pace of expenditure in scholarship component. It reportedly happened as States/UTs could not complete re-verification process. The Committee, although, were informed that the said reduction was not for the Scholarship Schemes but for other Schemes of the Ministry, nonetheless feel that as compared to other Ministries implementing similar Scholarship Schemes, the Ministry of Minority Affairs has stood way behind in utilizing the allotted funds. This surely calls for some introspection. While the Ministry have convinced that they would be able to utilize their allocation fully during the remaining period of the Financial Year 2020-21, the Committee are skeptical about the same since the trend of previous years indicates that except under the pre-matric Scholarship Scheme, the Ministry always had funds remaining underutilized at the end of the year for the other two Schemes. The Committee are unable to comprehend as to how the Ministry would accomplish objectives of these Schemes unless all States/UTs complete their processes of re-verification in a very short time, which, in all probability, is not likely to happen. While the Ministry have furnished information on the actual number of beneficiaries exceeding the targets in previous years there is nil information for 2020-21. The Committee would, therefore, like to be apprised of the position in 2020-21 at the action taken stage. As per the 15th Finance Commission Report, all the Schemes are likely to be reviewed for the next 5 years, hence, the Committee recommend that the monthly/quarterly expenditure plan of the Ministry for

the year 2021-22 must also be executed strictly so that they are able to justify their Schemes and project the correct requirement of funds at RE stage too.

Reply of the Government

5.2 Budget Estimate 2020-21 was reduced from Rs 5029 crore to Rs 4005 crore at Revised Estimate 2020-21 stage. With the concerted efforts and constant monitoring at highest level an amount of Rs 3998.57 crore i.e 99.84 % of RE of Rs 4005 crore was booked under various schemes of the Ministry during 2020-21.

Against the allocation of Rs. 2265 crore in 2020-21 for the 3 scholarship schemes viz., Pre-Matric, Post-Matric and Merit-cum-Means based Scholarship Schemes the Ministry has booked a total expenditure of Rs.2234.70crorei.e. 98.66% of the allocated budget. The Scheme-wise expenditure details for FY 2020-21 are as under:

Scheme	B.E. (In Rs. Cr.)	R.E. (In Rs. Cr.)	Expenditure (In Rs. Cr.)
Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme	1330.00	1330.00	1325.55
Post Matric Scholarship Scheme	535.00	535.00	512.81
Merit-cum-Means based Scholarship Scheme	400.00	400.00	396.34
Total	2265.00	2265.00	2234.70

It is further stated that the number of scholarships under the fresh category in each of the three schemes' is fixed as per the State/UT wise and community wise quota. However there is no quota for renewal scholarships and all eligible beneficiaries are entitled for renewal scholarship subject to verification of their applications. As far as the physical target is concerned, despite disruptions arising out of the COVID pandemic the targets under the 'fresh' category have largely been achieved and maximum numbers of eligible and genuine applicants have also covered under the

'renewal' category of these Schemes. The remaining applicants whose applications have been verified and who have made it to the merit list under the 'fresh' category but could not be paid due to technical reasons like payment failure, delay in bank validation or delay by the States in digitally signing of the payment files will be paid within the first quarter of the succeeding academic year i.e. 2021-22 after rectification/ signing of payment files by the States. The Scheme-wise details of the number of beneficiaries covered in FY 2020-21 are as under:

Scheme	Target (Fresh)	*Total Scholarships Sanctioned (As on 31.03.2021)
Pre-Matric	3000004	5046292
Post Matric	499999	648133
MCM	60000	117614
Total	3560000	5812039

*includes renewals

(Ministry of Minority Affairs OM No.G-20014/2/2021-Budget dated 01st June, 2021)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 2.10 of Chapter-I of the Report)

Recommendation (Para 3.11)

5.3 Three Central Sector Scholarship Schemes namely Pre-matric, Post-matric and Merit-cum-Means are being implemented by the Ministry of Minority Affairs for six centrally notified minority communities. The Committee are quite disturbed by cases reported about the alleged misappropriation of funds/funds going to fake students under these scholarship schemes for children belonging to underprivileged minorities in six States, which are under investigation/enquiry. In one State, after enquiry, the fraud is stated to have happened due to passwords leak by certain vested interests as

well as other loopholes. Taking advantage of illiteracy/lack of awareness among parents and children of minorities is also exploited by such elements. While the Ministry representatives have always been claiming that the system is fail-safe due to all transactions/verifications done online, a dedicated Portal, cash transfer through DBT and similar measures, which are definitely the need of the hour, it is disconcerting for the Committee to observe that such instances of corruption happened. However minuscule, this must have deprived the genuine beneficiaries of Government Scholarship Schemes and may have lead to some children dropping out too being unable to afford the school fee/other expenses. During their evidence, the Ministry representatives informed the Committee about further safety measures under their consideration, for instance, preserving the files of scholarship-holder students for a period of 5 years, creation of an Aadhaar vault in coordination with MeITY, requirement of signatures of School Principals in verification report filed by teacher, at least 2% physical verification, creation of student data bank with the help of Department of School education etc. While the Committee desire the Ministry to plug all identified loopholes in the system, strengthening privacy of data and passwords and reduce all manual interventions, be it school personnel, banking intermediaries, NGOs or unauthorised persons, they are of the strong opinion that the Ministry should also counsel the State Governments to try to reach out to a sample size of beneficiary minority students directly to ascertain that they are not being duped in the pretext of Government scholarships, and that they are actually in receipt, through DBT, of the full amount of the entitled scholarship money for the term, as approved against their names in the Portal. Also the banks should ensure that the accounts of students do not get closed due to non-activity since minority children cannot do regular transactions, because some evaluation studies have shown that the scholarship money gets reverted also due to accounts being inactive/closed. The Committee are

convinced that such measures can lead to a major improvement and hence recommend that action should be taken on this aspect. Now, as the COVID-19 vaccination is gaining speed, the Committee opine that the reopening of schools in full capacity and the resultant formalities and verifications etc. for disbursement of scholarships will pick up in the later part of the current Financial year. The Committee reiterate that fraudulent activity by unscrupulous elements in schools, banks, NGOs, VOs, etc., who find ways to circumvent the processes for their personal gains, must be stopped. In fact, the Committee learn that recently around 8000 NGOs have been delisted by the Government for various shortcomings in their functioning. Hence, the Committee reiterate that the Ministry should ensure that the online portal for scholarships should have enough security features/tools to detect any tampering/fraud in the passwords/codes, in consultation with NIC and persons/ organizations found guilty of malpractices should be removed with immediate effect. The Committee desire to be apprised of the progress in the Ministry's efforts as well as the outcome of the enquiries currently underway in some States on the matter.

Reply of the Government

5.4 The Ministry has taken various actions/initiatives during FY 2020-21 to strengthen the implementation of the Scholarship Schemes through National Scholarship Portal and issued various preventive measures to be taken by National Scholarship Portal (NSP)-NIC as well as Institute Nodal Officers/District Nodal Officers/State Nodal Officers. As desired by the Committee, the present status of various actions taken by the Ministry on the matter is as under:

(a) The matter was referred to Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) by the Ministry and a Preliminary Enquiry has been registered by them on the subject on 11th November 2020. The investigation report is awaited in this Ministry.

(b) The present status of the actions taken by the NSP-NIC as well as States/UTs are as under, which refers to the successful implementation of some of the directives issued by the Ministry:

- All verified applications till 12.01.2021 were reverted for re-verification and all such applications have been successfully re-verified within the stipulated timeline.
- NSP has provided previous year's information and data from U-DISE/ AISHE to serve as reference materials for verification by Institute Nodal Officers (INO) and District/State/UT Nodal Officers (DNO/SNO).
- Validation of date of birth and gender in addition to name of applicants through Aadhaar demographic authentication has been done.
- All DNOs and more than 90% INOs have been re-verified.
- Doubtful applications were identified with red flags by NSP to ensure and facilitate re-verification.
- The Ministry is also exploring to engage the services of Common Service Centre (CSC) to facilitate Aadhaar authenticated applications under Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme and Centre of Excellence for Data Analytics (CEDA) for data analytics in FY 2020-21.

(c) The following instructions have been issued by the Ministry to States/UTs to tighten the verification process:

- INO will maintain a hard file of applications and supporting documents, class-wise and academic year-wise, for inspection by district level and other authorities at any time.
- INO has to be an employee of the School/Institution.
- SNOs/DNOs to undertake mandatory physical verification of institutions and applicants as well as 2% of verified applications and furnish a report.
- Head of Institution to certify the list of applications verified by INO and send it to DNO/SNO for L 2 verification. NSP has created a separate login for Head of the Institution.
- Schools/Institutions will have to display the list of beneficiaries on the notice board and also to present the list of beneficiaries with final amount before the School Management Committee and obtain the signature of the student.

(d) Present status of the reports, sent by the five States where the investigation is under way, is as under:

- Report of Chhattisgarh State: The report says that it has been found that all alleged beneficiaries are genuine and assures no fraudulent incident.

- Report of Assam State: The investigation is under process with CID. Additional data required by them has been provided by MoMA. Interim/Final report in this matter is awaited.
- Report of Punjab State: The matter is under examination by S.S.P. Hoshiarpur.
- Report of Bihar State: The State has instructed District Magistrates of 9 concerned districts to enquire and investigate alleged cases. FIR has been lodged in Gaya and Saharsa Districts.
- Report of Jharkhand State: Matter has been handed over to Anticorruption Bureau (ACB) of State. Interim/Final report in this matter is awaited.

Besides, DBT Mission, Cabinet Secretariat and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) have also been apprised of these recommendations and the necessary directions have been issued by DBT Mission to NSP-NIC for rigorous implementation of these measures. DBT Mission, Cabinet Secretariat has also issued some common instructions/guidelines to be followed by all Ministries/Departments implementing their Schemes through NSP Portal.

It is further submitted that since NIC maintains the Portal and it is under the administrative control of DBT Mission, Cabinet Secretariat – the recommendations of the Committee will be forwarded to Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) as well as the DBT Mission Cabinet Secretariat for appropriate action.

(Ministry of Minority Affairs OM No.G-20014/2/2021-Budget dated 01st June, 2021)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 3.11 of Chapter-I of the Report)

NEW DELHI;

05 August, 2021
13 Sravana, 1943 (Saka)

RAMA DEVI
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on
Social Justice and
Empowerment

**MINUTES OF THE THIRTEENTH SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (2020-21) HELD ON THURSDAY,
5TH AUGUST, 2021**

The Committee met from 1030 hrs. to 1055 hrs. in Chairperson's Chamber, Room No. 113, PHA Extension Building, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Smt. Rama Devi - CHAIRPERSON

MEMBERS

LOK SABHA

2. Smt. Sangeeta Azad
3. Shri Bholanath 'B.P. Saroj'
4. Smt. Pramila Bisoyi
5. Shri Thomas Chazhikadan
6. Shri Y. Devendrappa
7. Smt. Geeta Kora
8. Shri Akshaibar Lal
9. Smt. Supriya Sule
10. Smt. Rekha Arun Verma

RAJYA SABHA

11. Smt. Jharna Das Baidya
12. Smt. Ramilaben Bara
13. Smt. Geeta *alias* Chandraprabha
14. Shri N. Chandrasegharan
15. Shri Narayan Koragappa
16. Shri Ramkumar Verma

SECRETARIAT

1. Smt. Anita B. Panda - Joint Secretary
2. Smt. Mamta Kemwal - Director
3. Shri Krishendra Kumar - Deputy Secretary

2. At the outset, Hon'ble Chairperson welcomed the Members to the sitting of the Committee and apprised them that the sitting has been convened to consider and adopt the following draft Reports of the Committee:

- (i) Twenty-third Report on the subject of 'Assessment of Scheme for Implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (SIPDA)' of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities);
- (ii) Twenty-fourth Report on Action taken by the Government on the observations/recommendations contained in the 64th Report of the Committee on 'Assessment of the working of Scheme of Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan (SCA to SCSP)' of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Social Justice and Empowerment); and
- (iii) Twenty-fifth Report on Action taken by the Government on the observations/recommendations contained in the 22nd Report of the Committee on 'Demands for Grants 2021-22)' of the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

3. Thereupon, the Chairperson requested the Members to give their suggestions, if any, on the draft Reports. The Reports were adopted by the Committee without any modifications. The Committee then authorized the Chairperson to finalize the draft Reports in the light of consequential changes that might arise out of factual verification of the draft Reports and to present the same to both the Houses.

(The Committee then adjourned)

APPENDIX

ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE TWENTY-SECOND REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT ON 'DEMANDS FOR GRANTS (2021-22)' OF THE MINISTRY OF MINORITY AFFAIRS (SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)

	Total	Percentage
I. Total number of Recommendations	5	
II. Observations/Recommendations, which have been accepted by the Government (Paragraph Nos. 5.7 and 6.12)	2	40%
III. Observations/Recommendations which the committee do not desire to pursue in view of the replies of the Government (Paragraph No. – 4.11)	1	20%
IV. Observations/Recommendations, in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted and which require reiteration (Paragraph No. - NIL)	0	0%
V. Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government are interim in nature (Paragraph No. - 2)	2	40%