

“ROAD MAP” for NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR MINORITIES

1. The Commission may nominate reputed NGOs / eminent persons in the Minority Concentration Districts (MCDs) for independent evaluation (especially implementation part) of various welfare schemes intended for minority communities. There should be no problem in finding out the interested NGOs and eminent and experienced persons to undertake this job on honorary basis. The proposals may be invited from the interested entities. These evaluators will directly submit their reports to the Commission indicating the position regarding funds allocation by the Government for various schemes, the amount actually spent, resultant benefits and shortfalls, if any. The above mentioned evaluation reports should be invited in respect of identified 90 Minority Concentration Districts (MCDs) or 350 minority concentrated agglomerations (towns). Since, the Government is considering to lower the criteria for declaring a MCD from 25 % minority population to 15 % minority population, therefore, the number of such districts and agglomerations is likely to go up. Once such reports are received at the headquarters, the trends of the schemes can be analysed and the actual position regarding fate of such schemes will be known. Based on results of such analysis, appropriate recommendations can be made by the Commission to the Government. NCM is perceived to be a body outside the Government and considered to be a watchdog.
 - (i) NCM can review various beneficiary oriented Central Government Schemes especially for the welfare of Minorities. These schemes have been compiled in a compendium prepared by NCM in June, 2009. For this purpose the Commission may hold interactive meetings with various Central Government Departments and Ministries and furnish its recommendations.
 - (ii) The Commission may also hold review meetings with various State Governments for the schemes being devised and administered by the State Governments.
 - (iii) Special emphasis may be laid on review of the progress of schemes included in the Prime Minister’s 15 Point Programme. Such reviews need to be undertaken with the concerned Central Ministries/Departments and the State Governments.
 - (iv) The Commission on the basis of feedback received from the public with regard to the developmental schemes of Central/State Governments may suggest modifications in the existing schemes as well as the new schemes aimed at overall development of minorities.
2. It is essential that the persons hailing from notified minority communities who possess adequate knowledge of Indian Polity, Economic Planning, Constitution Law, Administration and Public Finance are appointed as Members in the Commission. The incumbents having little or shallow knowledge in the above mentioned areas can hardly contribute to the proper functioning of NCM.

3. A study should also be entrusted to any reputed law institute / legal experts to examine as to whether the present safeguards provided to the minorities in the Constitution and other laws of the land are adequate and working properly or not? The areas requiring improvements should be identified and appropriate remedial actions should be suggested.

The Commission may also look into the issues relating to the 'Right to Freedom of Religion' guaranteed under the Constitution. The Bills and Acts of various State Governments dealing conversion/anti-conversion issues may also be scrutinized by the Commission to ensure that the freedom granted to the minorities under the Constitution regarding 'Freedom of Religion' is not adversely affected by such legislations and their 'Fundamental Right' regarding 'Freedom of Religion' guaranteed under the Constitution remains intact.

4. The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Members of the Commission should suggest the topics for the studies to be undertaken in respect of the five notified minority communities (having collective relevance or community wise relevance) positively by end of April every year. While proposing such studies it must be ensured that such studies should be within the purview of mandate of NCM. In other words, the subject matter of such studies should focus either on the problems arising out of any discrimination against minorities or socio-economic and educational development of minorities.
5. As could be observed from the functions of NCM described in Chapter 3 para 9 of the NCM Act, the role of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Members of the Commission is very crucial and require in-depth knowledge of the issues and problems of the minorities in the country. They are supposed to suggest appropriate measures in respect of any minority to be undertaken by the Government and also to make periodical or special reports to the Central Government. They are, therefore, supposed not only to possess the specialized knowledge of the facts and figures in respect of the five notified Minorities but also to have a fair knowledge of the functioning of the Governments and various administrative and financial procedures. To enable them to make effective and result oriented contribution, it is imperative that appropriate training should be imparted to them by the institutions like Indian Institute of Public Management (IIPM), Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA). It is noticed that considerable time is lost in familiarization of Members with the rules and procedures in the Government. The Indian Institute of Public Administration may devise a two week duration training module / foundation programme for the new Members to upgrade their knowledge and skills required for effective and meaningful contribution in NCM.

6. NCM needs to have greater interaction with youths of minority communities (especially colleges and university students) to have an assessment of ground realities, aspirations of the new generation and the role they foresee for them in the community welfare and nation building at large.
7. The main impediment in the way of achieving our goal is the lack of investigating powers. Therefore, the first aim of NCM should be that NCM should get investigating powers as are available to SC / ST Commissions and National Human Rights Commission so that independent investigation could be held by NCM. This would give teeth to NCM and would act as a deterrent on those who indulge in activities which are communal in nature and acts leading to deprivation of rights of minorities.
8. NCM has emerged as an independent statutory body but is considered and treated as an extended arm of the Government. The NCM Act, 1992 provides for NCM to be a grantee body. The intention of the law, it can be gauged, is to give full autonomy. Therefore, more autonomy both functional and financial have to be granted by declaring it as a grantee institution. Besides, grant of Constitutional Status to NCM would be a positive step in this direction. NCM, therefore, must be bestowed with Constitutional Status, grantee status as well as investigating powers.
9. NCM looks after five notified minority communities viz. Muslims, Christians, Parsis, Sikhs & Buddhists. The religious and cultural ethos, socio-religious practices and conditions of each of them is different from one another. The socio-economic conditions of these communities are also greatly vary from each other. Members in the NCM are appointed based on their religion. This has perhaps lead to a situation where NCM today is found working in compartments, and not as a homogeneous or collective group or team work i.e. looking after the interests of the community to which they belong. NCM, therefore, needs to develop a system so that it functions as a body for the betterment and well being of all minorities in cohesion. There is an urgent need to break this tradition of compartmentalization of NCM.
10. We have a federal polity. Only 15 States have so far set up State Minorities Commissions to act as a watchdog of minority rights and ensure their welfare. There is a need for having SMCs in all the States / UTs. The National Commission and State Commissions should act in unison and there should be convergence on role and functions on minority concerns to have greater impact.
11. Recognition of NCM would depend much on its effective functioning and more on its ability to deliver. NCM needs to adopt an outreach approach to enhance its image. Though NCM is doing a good job but its work is not visible in public. NCM, therefore, should not only do better but should also be seen to be doing good work. NCM needs to become the voice of minorities. NCM needs a separate budget head-IEC for seminars, publicity and conferences. A separate media cell is also required in NCM for giving

better exposure of NCM activities in public. The NCM Act lays emphasis on evaluation and monitoring of development and rights of minorities. NCM requires to take up more evaluation and undertake more and more research and trend analysis studies for which augmentation of funds under the head 'Research Studies' is an absolute necessity.

12. The Commission may undertake certain important studies like the intake of community-wise minority candidates in various academic, professional, occupational and other job oriented courses being run by various Colleges, Universities and other institutions (other than having the minority status) in the country. Such a study may also include the number of students studying and passed out from various Colleges and Universities at graduation level and their placement in various jobs. The findings of such studies and NCM's recommendations may be communicated to the Government for improving representation of minority communities' students in the non-minority institutions.
13. A study may also be carried out on the existing minority institutions (especially Muslim institutions) imparting education at Secondary and Sr. Secondary levels. It is generally observed that the secondary/Sr. Secondary schools and intermediate Colleges having minority status are considerably lagging behind in terms of the quality and performance. Such a study may suggest useful recommendations for improving their plight. The study may also focus on the maladministration prevalent in such institutions, the causes responsible for the same and the remedial course of action.
14. The Commission may also analyse the nature and scope of complaints received in the Commission. This would be helpful in understanding the dimension of the grievances being received in the Commission. It may easily be identified that on which front (economic, social, legal or educational) more concerted efforts are required.
15. The Commission may also have a look into the general developmental schemes (not exclusively meant for minorities) to know the extent of benefits availed by the minorities from these schemes.
16. The Commission may get in touch with the Institute of Secretariat Training & Management (ISTM) to devise suitable training modules for its staff so that they can contribute more effectively in smooth and efficient functioning of Commission and discharge of the mandate assigned to it.