

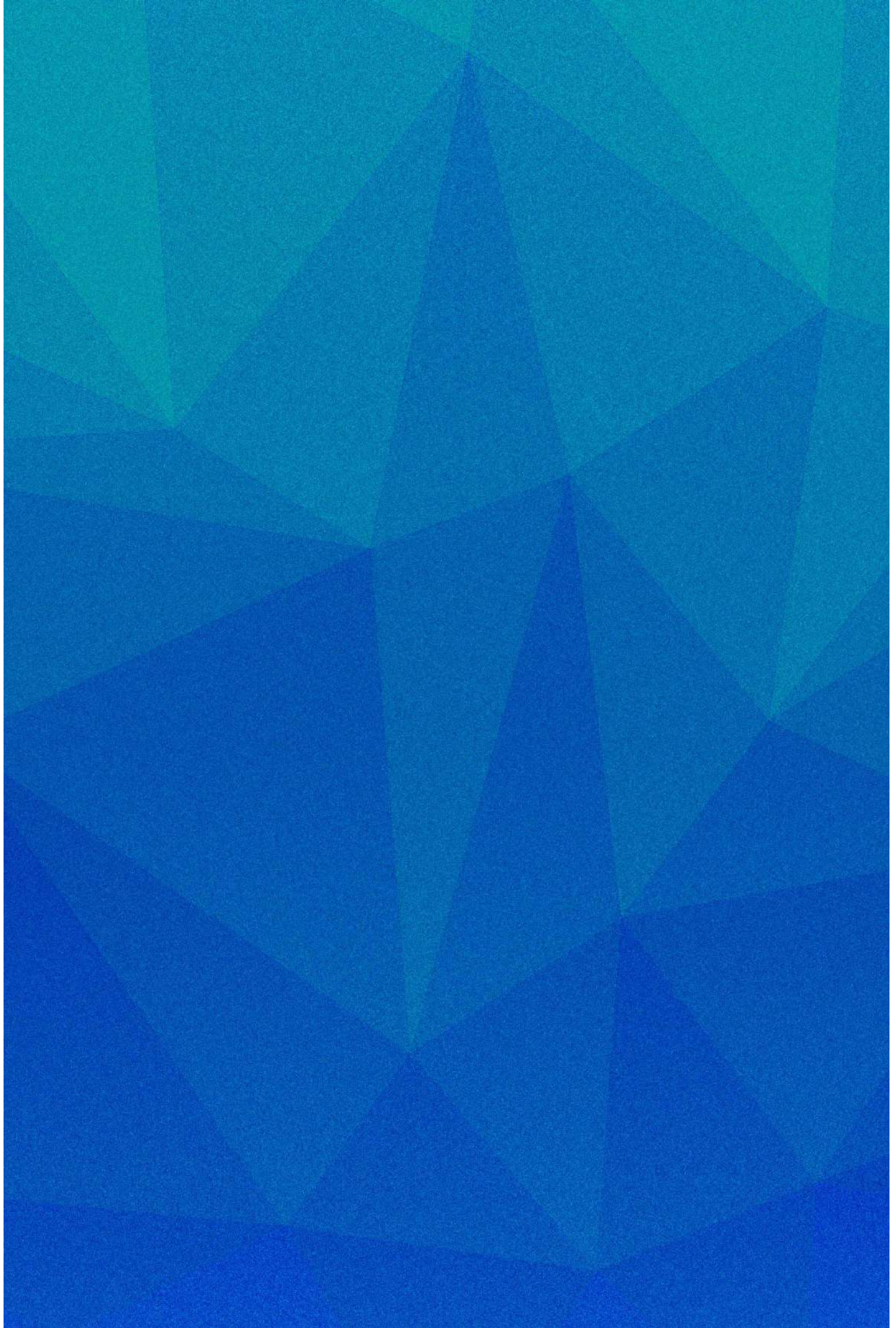


Compendium

Conference of State Minorities Commissions

25th March, 2025 | New Delhi





Preface

The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) organized a National Conference focused on the education, inclusion, and empowerment of minority communities in India. Bringing together policymakers, experts, and stakeholders from across the country, the conference served as a vibrant platform for dialogue, strategy, and knowledge-sharing.

Union Minister Shri Kiren Rijju and Minister of State Shri George Kurian addressed the gathering, reaffirming the government's commitment to minority welfare and inclusive development. NCM Chairman Shri Iqbal Singh Lalpura highlighted the significant role of minorities in nation-building and the importance of collaborative engagement.

Two technical sessions explored minority participation in education and welfare, while an open-house discussion enabled participants to share regional insights and solutions. This publication captures the key deliberations and recommendations from the event.

The NCM remains dedicated to advancing equity, opportunity, and empowerment for all communities. We hope this volume inspires meaningful policy dialogue and action towards a more inclusive India.

National Commission for Minorities

New Delhi



Conference of State Minorities Commissions

The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) organized Conference of State Minorities Commissions on 25th March, 2025 in New Delhi, focusing on education, inclusion, and empowerment of minorities in India. The event witnessed the participation of key policymakers, experts, and stakeholders who deliberated on education and equitable opportunities and welfare for minority communities.

Hon'ble Minister of State for Minority Affairs, Shri George Kurian, graced the occasion as the Guest of Honour and inaugurated the conference. In his inaugural address, Shri Kurian emphasized the government's commitment to the empowerment of minority communities. He highlighted that there are numerous schemes dedicated to uplifting minority communities, along with additional initiatives designed for their welfare. Shri Kurian also emphasized that minorities in India enjoy greater safety and security compared to some neighboring nations.

Chairman, National Commission for Minorities, Shri Iqbal Singh Lalpura, set the stage for discussions with his inaugural address, followed by insightful sessions featuring distinguished panelists. Shri Lalpura elaborated on the contributions of minority communities to nation-building and underscored the role of the Commission as a platform for addressing key issues. He welcomed the perspectives of participants and spoke of the need to learn from the best practices from across the country. He said, "The strength of a democracy is not measured by how it treats its majority but by how it safeguards the rights of its minorities".



Held against the backdrop of India's continued pursuit of inclusive governance, The conference brought together an esteemed assembly of policymakers, academicians, government officials, legal experts, educationists, and representatives from State Minorities Commissions. The central theme revolved around education, inclusion, and socio-economic upliftment, and the discussions reflected the government's multi-pronged strategy to ensure equitable access to opportunities and welfare programs for minority communities.

Inauguration and Dignitary Addresses

The conference commenced with a traditional lamp-lighting ceremony, symbolizing wisdom, enlightenment, and the collective journey toward justice and equality. The Guest of Honour, Hon'ble Minister of State for



Minority Affairs, **Shri George Kurian**, officially inaugurated the event. In his inaugural address, he emphasized the government's steadfast commitment to the cause of minority welfare and empowerment.

Shri George Kurian emphasized :

Several central government schemes are aimed at bridging developmental gaps and strengthening minority participation in nation-building. These include initiatives focused on education, skill development, employment generation, and entrepreneurship. Minorities in India enjoy a robust constitutional framework that guarantees their rights and liberties, and the government's proactive efforts continue to bolster their socio-economic standing.

Shri Kurian also drew attention to the fact that, unlike in many neighboring countries, Indian minorities live with dignity, peace, and legal protection. His remarks served to reaffirm the secular and pluralistic ethos enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

Chairman's Welcome Address

The welcome address was delivered by Hon'ble Chairman Shri Iqbal Singh Lalpura, who articulated the vision and mission of the Commission. He called upon the delegates to engage in open, honest, and constructive dialogue that transcends political affiliations and ideological divides.



Shri Lalpura underscored the importance of State Minority Commissions in bridging the gap between grassroots realities and national policymaking. He elaborated on the Commission's role in monitoring the implementation of welfare schemes, addressing grievances, conducting policy research, and providing recommendations to the central and state governments.

In a powerful message, he said:

"The strength of a democracy is not measured by how it treats its majority but by how it safeguards the rights of its minorities."

He welcomed the diverse voices present at the conference and stressed the importance of institutional collaboration. The NCM, he assured, would actively consider incorporating successful models and best practices from state commissions into its national framework.

Overview of Key Themes

The conference was designed around three interconnected themes:

- Education for Empowerment
- Inclusion and Welfare for Equitable Development
- Strengthening Institutional Mechanisms through Dialogue

Each theme was explored through technical sessions, panel discussions, and open-house interactions, ensuring that the conference remained a dynamic and participatory exercise.

Technical Session I: Education – Ensuring Access and Support for Minorities

The first technical session focused on the crucial theme of education as a tool of empowerment. Chaired by senior educationists and policymakers, the panel included distinguished speakers from academic institutions, NGOs, and minority-serving organizations.

Key highlights included:

Recognition of Minority Institutions: Speakers applauded the contributions of Christian missionary institutions, which have historically played a pivotal role in advancing quality education in India, especially among the marginalized.

Challenges Identified:

- Inadequate representation of minorities in higher education.
- Regional disparities in educational access.
- Low awareness and uptake of scholarships and fellowships.
- Language and cultural barriers in certain educational institutions.

Recommendations:

- Strengthening implementation of schemes such as Pre-Matric, Post-Matric, and Merit-cum-Means scholarships.
- Enhancing digital literacy and access to e-learning platforms.
- Encouraging more minority students to pursue STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) disciplines.
- Integrating culturally relevant pedagogical approaches.

Panelists also emphasized the need for monitoring mechanisms to ensure that minority educational institutions are not subjected to undue bureaucratic hurdles. Greater coordination between the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Minority Affairs was also suggested.

Technical Session II: Minority Inclusion and Welfare

The second session delved into broader themes of inclusion, socio-economic justice, and welfare delivery. The session focused on how policy initiatives can better respond to the complex realities faced by minority groups, especially women, youth, and economically weaker sections.

Topics covered included:

- The role of self-employment schemes such as those offered by the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC).
- Success stories from states like Kerala, where targeted financial support has enabled minority entrepreneurs to start and scale ventures.
- The need to strengthen healthcare, housing, and sanitation services in minority-concentrated areas.
- Gender inclusivity and special focus on minority women through education, micro-financing, and skill development programs.

Key Takeaways:

- Welfare programs must be data-driven, region-specific, and community-sensitive.
- There is a need to raise awareness about government schemes through local outreach, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas.
- Enhancing inter-ministerial cooperation and convergence of schemes would lead to better outcomes.
- Digital inclusion must be prioritized to prevent the marginalization of tech-disconnected communities.

Chief Guest's Address: Union Minister Shri Kiren Rijiju

The highlight of the conference was the special address by the Hon'ble Union Minister for Minority Affairs, Shri Kiren Rijiju, who attended the event as the Chief Guest. Shri Rijiju delivered a powerful and thoughtful address that echoed the spirit of constitutional equality and national unity.



He began by acknowledging the invaluable contributions of India's diverse religious and linguistic communities. He reaffirmed that the government's developmental agenda is not driven by identity politics but by the universal principle of inclusive growth.

Shri Rijiju specifically emphasized:

The success of NMDFC's financial assistance programs in states like Kerala, where minority youth and women have been able to turn small loans into thriving businesses.

The need to hold state-level conferences modeled on this national conference to foster regional knowledge exchange.

The importance of interfaith cooperation, promoting mutual respect, and rejecting all forms of sectarianism.

He also proposed convening a national-level meeting of all State Minority Affairs Ministers to establish a unified roadmap for addressing state-specific challenges, while also strengthening centrally sponsored schemes.

On financial support, Shri Rijju announced that the Ministry is open to considering gap funding proposals from states that wish to implement or scale up minority welfare initiatives but are constrained by limited budgets.

He concluded by reiterating the government's guiding principle, "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas", and assured that every citizen of India, regardless of religion or background, will be given equal opportunity to grow and thrive.

Open-House Discussion: Voices from the States

An important feature of the conference was the open-house discussion, which invited representatives from various State Minority Commissions to share their experiences, challenges, and best practices.

This session was moderated by senior NCM officials and featured contributions from:

- State Commission Chairs and Members
- Academicians and Community Leaders
- Legal Advisors and Government Representatives
- and skill development programs.

Common Challenges Shared:

- Delays in receiving funds from state and central governments.
- Lack of adequate manpower and infrastructure in State Commissions.
- Need for greater autonomy and clearer mandates.
- Regional gaps in scheme implementation.

Best Practices Highlighted:

- Community mentorship programs in Tamil Nadu.
- Legal aid cells for minorities in Maharashtra.
- Interfaith harmony campaigns in Punjab.
- Scholarship awareness drives in Uttar Pradesh.

The open-house session emphasized the value of federal cooperation and encouraged the creation of a national repository of best practices, to be shared with all states for adoption and customization.

Concluding Remarks by NCM Chairman

The conference concluded with remarks from Shri Iqbal Singh Lalpura, who summarized the key takeaways and action points. He expressed his gratitude to all participants for their active involvement and assured that the NCM would continue to be a responsive and inclusive institution.

Shri Lalpura reiterated that the Commission is committed to transforming dialogue into action, ensuring that policies reach the last mile. He also announced plans to publish a compendium of proceedings and policy recommendations emerging from the conference, which would be shared with central and state agencies.

In his closing words, he said:

"Empowering minorities is not an act of charity. It is an act of justice. It is about building an India where diversity is celebrated, rights are respected, and opportunities are available to all."



Conclusion

The National Conference of State Minorities Commissions proved to be a meaningful step forward in India's journey toward inclusive development. By fostering a space for consultation, collaboration, and policy innovation, the event reaffirmed the commitment of the Government of India and the NCM to uphold the rights and dignity of minority communities.

The deliberations and resolutions from this conference are expected to inform future policymaking and lead to tangible improvements in the lives of millions across the country. As India continues to move ahead as a pluralistic democracy, platforms like these remain vital in ensuring that no community is left behind.

Technical Session – I

Education:

Ensuring Access and Support to Minorities
Celebrating Voices. Shaping Futures.

Opening Reflections

Dr. Jaswinder Singh Dhillon

Former Vice-Chancellor, Guru Kashi University, Bathinda

The Session Moderator Dr. Jaswinder Singh Dhillon, in his concluding remarks, reflected on the collective aspiration for quality education, equal opportunity, and national belonging. He called for continued collaboration to transform this vision into reality, thanking the panelists and audience for their valuable contributions



Technical Session – I

Education:

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Opening Reflections

Dr. Michael Williams

Director, Mount Carmel School (Christian Community)

Dr. Michael Williams highlighted the Christian community's vital role in education, managing over 55,000 institutions despite being only 2.3% of the population. He noted that over 90% of students in Christian schools come from the majority community. He stressed the need to safeguard the autonomy of minority institutions and called for education rooted in unity, compassion, and humanity.



Technical Session – I

Education:

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Opening Reflections

Dr. Indu Jain

Founder, Jain Dharma Rakshak Foundation

Dr. Indu Jain spoke of the Jain community's historical contributions to education. She emphasized reviving Jain values like Ahimsa and Satya within modern curricula, and encouraged Sanskrit and Prakrit studies to spiritually enrich young minds.



Technical Session – I

Education:

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Opening Reflections

Col. Jaibans Singh (Retd.)

Community Representative (Sikh Community)

Col. Jaibans Singh (Retd.) outlined challenges faced by rural Sikh youth, such as declining interest in higher education and migration. He advocated for vocational training, promotion of Punjabi digital platforms, and integration of Sikh history into national curriculum, urging collaboration between SGPC and the Commission.



Technical Session – I

Education:

Ensuring Access and Support to Minorities
Celebrating Voices. Shaping Futures.

Opening Reflections

Shri Sirajuddin Qureshi

Former President, India Islamic Cultural Centre (Muslim Community)

Shri Sirajuddin Qureshi discussed the educational progress and challenges within the Muslim community. He welcomed the increasing participation of Muslim girls in higher education but raised concerns about limited Urdu-based career opportunities, procedural hurdles in establishing educational institutions, and lack of awareness regarding welfare schemes. He stressed the need for modernizing Madrasas and strengthening educational support and avenues for minority students.



Concluding Remarks

Dr. Jaswinder Singh Dhillon

“Diversity is not a barrier, it is the bridge. And education is the pillar that upholds it.”

Summing up the vibrant session, Dr. Dhillon emphasized that despite the diverse concerns voiced, the goal was shared: a just, inclusive, and empowered India through education.

He thanked all panelists for their insightful contributions and encouraged continued collaboration beyond the session, toward policy implementation, community empowerment, and lasting transformation.



Technical Session II:

Minority Inclusion and Welfare

Role of Government for Empowerment and Development

The second session highlighted the necessity of government intervention in formulating policies and activities that empower minorities and ensure inclusive development. Panelists underscored the need for proactive government policies and welfare programs that ensure inclusive development. The session focused on sustainable models for economic and social empowerment of minority communities.

Opening Reflections

Shri Deepak Mukarjee

Governing Body Member of St. Stephen's College

The second technical session began with a welcome address by Moderator, **Shri Deepak Mukarjee**, Governing Body Member of St. Stephen's College. Highlighting constitutional safeguards (Articles 14-16, 25-30); he called for stronger implementation of key welfare schemes like the new 15-Point Programme, PMJVK, and minority scholarship programs. Applauding the open-door policy of NCM, he urged for inclusion of minority women, robust monitoring, and faster implementation.



Technical Session II:

Minority Inclusion and Welfare

Role of Government for Empowerment
and Development

Opening Reflections

Brig. P.S. Gothra (Retd.)

Sikh Representative

Brig. P.S. Gothra (Retd.) emphasized India's rich diversity and constitutional guarantees for minorities. He praised government initiatives like erstwhile schemes Nai Manzil and USTTAD but raised concerns about the digital literacy gap hindering scholarship applications. He recommended simplifying processes, enhancing digital access, and promoting regional languages like Gurmukhi to preserve minority identities



Technical Session II:

Minority Inclusion and Welfare

Role of Government for Empowerment
and Development

Opening Reflections

Acharya Yeshi La

Buddhist Representative

Acharya Yeshi La spoke about the challenges facing the Buddhist community. Stressing the need for Minority Commissions at the state level, he urged faster fund disbursement to monasteries, an increase in scholarships, and greater cultural preservation efforts. He also recommended establishing Kartik Purnima as an official holiday.



Technical Session II:

Minority Inclusion and Welfare

Role of Government for Empowerment
and Development

Opening Reflections

Prof. Jaykumar Upadhye

Jain Representative

Prof. Jaykumar Upadhye highlighted the importance of preserving Jain identity and culture through initiatives like the Classical Language status for Prakrit. He credited the leadership of the NCM Chairman for this achievement and called for promoting the language.



Technical Session II:

Minority Inclusion and Welfare

Role of Government for Empowerment
and Development

Opening Reflections

Dr. Shernaz Cama

Parsi Representative

Dr. Shernaz Cama voiced concerns about the declining Parsi population. She called for the revival of the Jiyo Parsi programme and proposed setting up a physical center for Parsi Cultural Studies at Tata Institute, Mumbai. She emphasized need for supporting Parsi youth and safeguarding their unique heritage and traditions.



Concluding Remarks

Shri Mukarjee concluded by thanking all panelists for their valuable insights.

“Education and cultural identity are the bedrock of true inclusion,” he stated, quoting

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam:

“The nation is bigger than any other aspect in my country.”

The session ended with Chairperson **Shri Iqbal Singh Lalpura** presenting mementos to all speakers, celebrating their commitment to community development and inclusive nation-building.



Open-House Discussion: Fostering Collaboration and Sharing Success Stories

A Platform for Collective Learning

A key highlight of the conference was the Open-House Discussion, which brought together representatives of State Minorities Commissions, state government officials, and other invitees. The session served as a vibrant platform for exchange, where participants shared their experiences, insights, and innovative approaches to empowering minority communities.

Showcasing Innovative State Practices

Tamil Nadu: Guiding Youth through Mentorship

Tamil Nadu's community mentorship programs emerged as an inspiring model for youth engagement. These initiatives focus on nurturing young talent from minority communities through local guidance, skill-building, and leadership development.

Maharashtra: Ensuring Justice through Legal Aid

Maharashtra has successfully set up dedicated legal aid cells for minorities, ensuring timely access to legal support and awareness of rights. This initiative reflects the state's commitment to promoting inclusion and justice for all.

Punjab: Promoting Interfaith Harmony

Punjab's interfaith harmony campaigns were widely appreciated for promoting mutual respect, understanding, and peaceful coexistence among diverse religious communities. These campaigns stand as a beacon of unity and social cohesion.

Uttar Pradesh: Expanding Educational Access

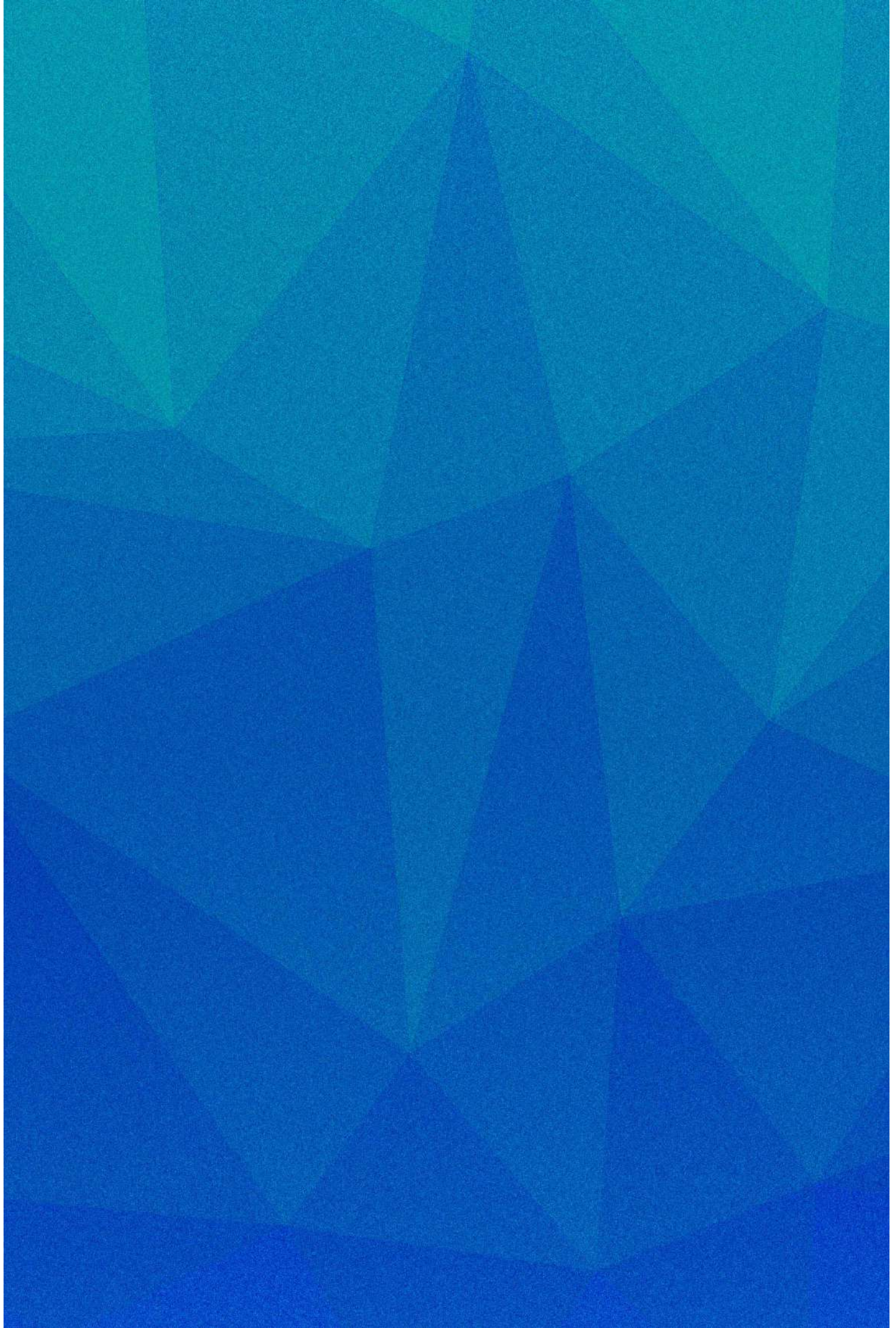
Uttar Pradesh has undertaken extensive scholarship awareness drives, enabling eligible students from minority communities to benefit from educational opportunities. The initiative has significantly enhanced awareness and participation at the grassroots level.

Building on Shared Success

Encouraging a National Exchange of Best Practices

The session concluded with a strong consensus on the creation of a national repository of best practices, allowing all states to share, adapt, and replicate successful initiatives. This step will further promote collaborative learning and nationwide progress in strengthening minority welfare.







National Commission for Minorities

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