



## Empowering Minorities: Building Inclusive India!

(Ministry of Minority Affairs)

16<sup>th</sup> December, 2024

*"The government has strived to serve the people with the mantra of 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas' and the principles of 'Sarv Panth Sambhav', which means all religions are equal."*

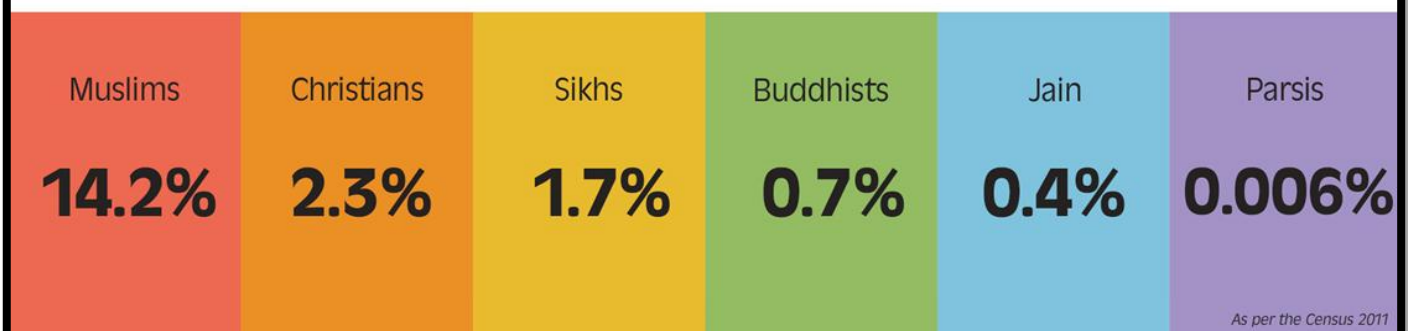
*~Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi<sup>1</sup>*

### Introduction

India is a diverse country, where empowering minority communities is key to ensuring equal access to opportunities for social, economic, and educational development. The Government of India, through the Ministry of Minority Affairs, has launched several schemes to support the six notified minority communities—Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and Zoroastrians (Parsis). With minorities making up 19.3% of the population, the government has identified 90 Minority Concentration Districts, 710 Blocks, and 66 Towns to focus resources on their upliftment. These efforts aim to bridge gaps and ensure the inclusion of minorities in India's growth.<sup>2</sup>

### Percentage of Minorities in the Country

19.3% of the Total Population



### Institutions to Safeguard Minorities<sup>3</sup>

The Ministry of Minority Affairs was established on 29th January 2006, carved out from the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, to focus on issues concerning the minority. The ministry's mandate includes policy formulation, coordination, evaluation, and oversight of development programs for these communities. To further protect minority rights, the Union Government set up the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) under the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992. Five religious communities were initially notified as minorities, and in 2014, Jains were also included. Both the NCM and State Minorities Commissions work to

<sup>1</sup> <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=2030302&reg=3&lang=1>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.minorityaffairs.gov.in/WriteReadData/RTF1984/1659697873.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.minorityaffairs.gov.in/show\\_content.php?lang=1&level=0&id=216&lid=221](https://www.minorityaffairs.gov.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=0&id=216&lid=221)

safeguard the interests of minorities as per the Constitution and laws enacted by the Parliament and State Legislatures.

**The Waqf Act, 1995 (as amended in 2013)**, is administered by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, under which the Central Waqf Council (CWC), a statutory body, was established by the Central Government as per the provisions of Section 9 of the Waqf Act, 1995. The Hon'ble Minister of Minority Affairs serves as the ex-officio Chairperson of the Council, which consists of 20 members.

Additionally, the Ministry implements two schemes through the Implementing Agency, i.e., the Central Waqf Council (CWC), namely: **Qaumi Waqf Board Taraqqiati Scheme (QWBTS) and Shahari Waqf Sampatti Vikas Yojana (SWSVY)**, for automation and modernization of State Waqf Boards. Under QWBTS, Government Grants-in-Aid (GIA) is provided to State Waqf Boards through CWC for the deployment of manpower to computerize and digitize records of waqf properties and to enhance the administration of Waqf Boards. Under SWSVY, GIA is provided to CWC for further disbursement of interest-free loans to Waqf Boards / Waqf Institutions to develop commercially viable projects on waqf properties. **Rs 23.87 crore and Rs 7.16 crore respectively were spent under QWBTS and SWSVY from 2019-20 to 2023-24.**

**Dargah Khwaja Saheb, Ajmer:** The Dargah of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti at Ajmer, popularly known as Gharib Nawaz, is administered by a Dargah Committee, under the Ministry of Minority Affairs through the Central Act, Durgah Khawaja Saheb Act, 1955. The Dargah Committee facilitates millions of devotees of various faiths that arrive at the Shrine to pay their respects to the Sufi Saint. Various charitable activities are undertaken under the auspices of the Dargah including Langar (Communal meal) for the devotees twice a day, medical facilities for the pilgrims, free food during Ramadan, stipends to widows and destitute women, financial aid to needy students, toilet and guest house complexes, zakat services and a 1100 pupil CBSE Affiliated School (Khwaja Model School). The Dargah through its charitable and social activities strives towards the upliftment of the marginalized and the downtrodden in alignment with the tenets of Khwaja Gharib Nawaz.

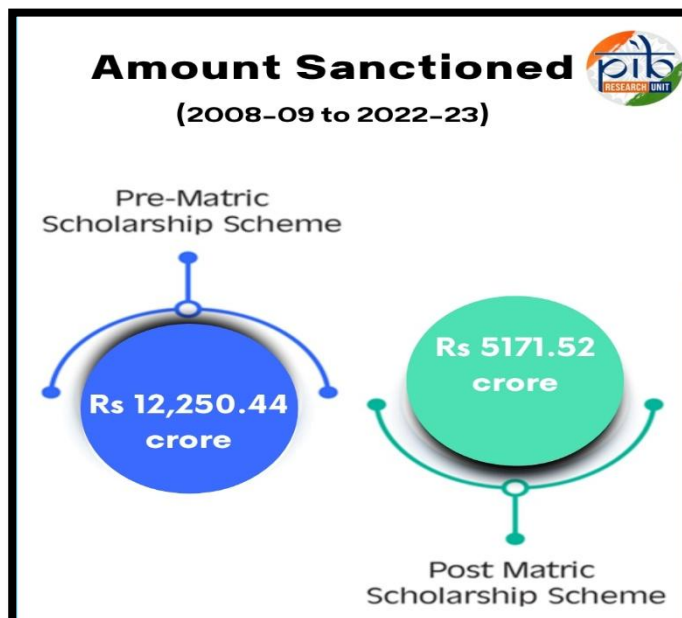
## Government Initiatives for Minority Welfare

The Government of India has launched several schemes focusing on education, employment, and infrastructure development to safeguard the rights and improve the lives of minorities.

### Schemes for Promoting Education

According to the 2011 Census, the literacy rates of minority communities like Christians, Jains, Sikhs, and Buddhists surpass the national average of 72.98%, with Muslims having a rate of 68.54%. To further promote education and enhance accessibility, various scholarships are offered to students from different religious backgrounds. **The following scholarship schemes are available for minority students:**

**Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme:** This scheme provides scholarships to minority students from Class IX to X, with 30% of the scholarships earmarked for girls. Rs 12,250.44 crore were sanctioned from 2008-09 to 2022-23 to 710.94 lakh beneficiaries.

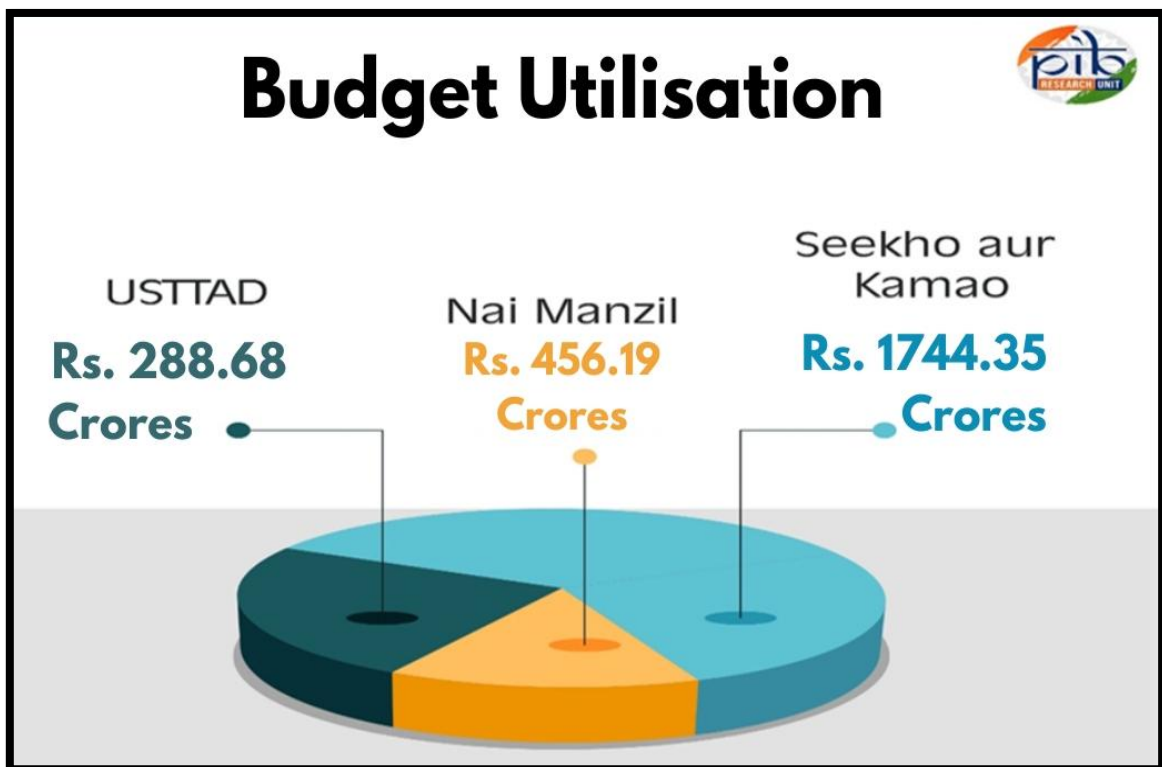


**Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme:** Offers scholarships to minority students from Class XI to PhD, with 30% earmarked for girls. Rs 5171.52 crore were sanctioned from 2008-09 to 2022-23 to 92.39 lakh beneficiaries.

### Support for Skill Development

Scholarships alone can't drive minority development; economic empowerment is key. The government is addressing this through initiatives like the PM VIKAS Scheme, which focuses on entrepreneurship and leadership training, empowering individuals for better jobs and self-employment.

**PM VIKAS:**<sup>4</sup> **Pradhan Mantri Virasat Ka Samvardhan (PM VIKAS)** aims to enhance the employability of youth by providing industry-relevant skills training. Later, five schemes—Seekho Aur Kamao, Nai Manzil, USTTAD (Upgrading the Skills and Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development), Nai Roshni, and the Hamari Dharohar scheme—were merged into the PM VIKAS to better support artisan communities.



21,604 beneficiaries were trained and 41 Hunar Haats were organised and Rs 288.68 crore were spent under USTTAD. Rs 456.19 crore were spent and 98,709 beneficiaries were trained under Nai Manzil. Rs 1,744.35 crore were spent and 4.68 lakh beneficiaries were trained under Seekho aur Kamao.

### Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment:

Similarly, to empower minority communities economically, the government is providing financial assistance to minority entrepreneurs, helping them start or expand businesses and improve their livelihoods. Through these efforts, both education and entrepreneurship are being supported for sustainable growth. To achieve this, the **National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC)**, established on 30th September 1994, plays a key role by offering financial aid to both new and existing businesses within minority communities. Rs 8,771.88 crore were disbursed to 23,85,809 beneficiaries till 2023-24 through initiatives like

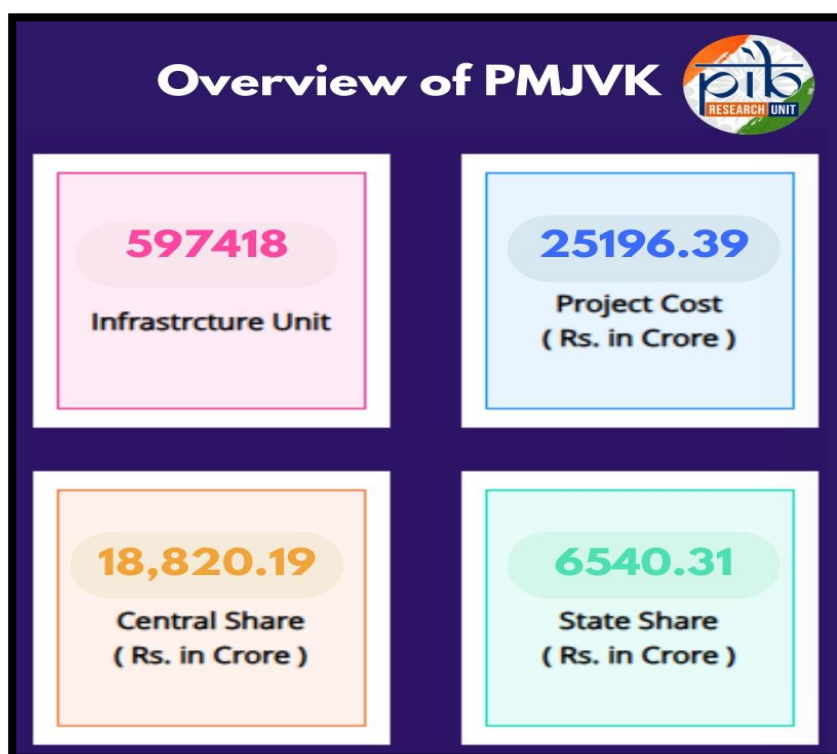
<sup>4</sup> [https://sansad.in/getFile/annex/265/AU1561\\_HMNueX.pdf?source=pqars](https://sansad.in/getFile/annex/265/AU1561_HMNueX.pdf?source=pqars)

Micro Credit, Micro Credit via NGOs, and Term Loans, ensuring inclusive economic growth and skill development for minority entrepreneurs across the country.<sup>5</sup>



### PMJVK: Infrastructure Development Scheme<sup>6</sup>

The government is dedicated to improving the quality of life in underdeveloped regions through the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK)**, launched in May 2018. This Centrally Sponsored Scheme focuses on creating essential community infrastructure and basic amenities in 1300 identified areas, with the aim of bridging socio-economic gaps. The scheme is implemented by State and Union Territory Governments, ensuring that the developed infrastructure benefits all residents in these areas. From 2022-23, PMJVK is being expanded to all districts of the country under the 15th Finance Commission Cycle, with revised guidelines to enhance its reach and impact.



### Preserving Minority Heritage and Promoting Cultural Legacy

Culture is the backbone of any community, shaping its identity and values. To preserve and promote minority cultures, it is essential to focus on their heritage and traditions. By doing so, we can ensure that these rich legacies continue to thrive for future generations.

<sup>5</sup> <https://nmdfc.org/yearwiseachievements> (Data)

<sup>6</sup> <https://pmjvk.minorityaffairs.gov.in/>

🚩 **Jiyo Parsi Scheme:**<sup>7</sup> Launched in 2013-14, the scheme aims to reverse the declining Parsi population in India through targeted interventions. Rs 26.78 crore were spent from 2014-15 to 2023-24 under the scheme. Since its launch, the scheme has supported the birth of 414 Parsi children till 2022-23.

**The scheme consists of three main components:**

- **Medical Assistance:** Provides financial support to Parsi couples for medical treatments following standard medical protocols.
  - **Health of Community:** Offers financial aid for child care and support for elderly Parsi individuals.
  - **Advocacy & Outreach:** Conducts programs to raise awareness and encourage the Parsi community to take part in the initiative.
- 🚩 **Pali Language Classical Status:** On October 3, 2024, Pali was granted Classical Language status, enabling initiatives to revive its study and research, especially in relation to Buddhism.
- 🚩 **International Abhidhamma Divas:** In 2024 Ministry of Culture celebrate 17<sup>th</sup> October 2024 as International Abhidhamma Diwas. This day honors the Abhidhamma's role in guiding ethical conduct and mindfulness, highlighting India's key role in preserving Buddhism's legacy.
- 🚩 **Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities:** Responsible for protecting the rights of linguistic minorities, this body oversees communities whose native language is different from the principal state or district language. It ensures their cultural and educational rights are protected, fostering inclusivity.

**Studies: Impact evaluation studies of schemes are conducted from time to time. Some of the studies conducted in recent years are as under:**

- ❖ Impact and Evaluation Study of Scholarship Schemes by IIT (Indian Institute of Technology) Delhi in 2020;
- ❖ Monitoring and Impact Evaluation of the Scholarship Schemes for students belonging to Minority community done by NCAER (National Council of Applied Economic Research) in 2023;
- ❖ Impact and Evaluation Study for Jiyo Parsi Scheme done by TISS (Tata Institute of Social Sciences) in 2021;
- ❖ Study of Seekho Aur Kamao by MDI (Management Development Institute), Gurugram in 2020;
- ❖ Study of Nai Manzil by M/s Mott McDonald in 2021;
- ❖ Study of Nai Roshni by CMRSD (Centre for Market Research and Social Development) in 2021;
- ❖ Study of USTTAD by MDI, Gurugram in 2020;
- ❖ Study of Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram by NITI Aayog in 2021; and
- ❖ Evaluation Study of Qaumi Waqf Board Taraqqiati Scheme and Shahari Waqf Sampatti Vikas Yojana done by IIT Delhi in 2021.

**Conclusion: Impact of Minority Welfare Schemes**

The government's minority welfare programs are designed to help marginalized communities access education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and better living conditions. These initiatives focus on empowering individuals, helping minorities thrive on their own. By promoting inclusivity, the schemes aim to support the growth of these communities, contributing to India's overall social and economic

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.minorityaffairs.gov.in/show\\_content.php?lang=1&level=2&ls\\_id=242&lid=61](https://www.minorityaffairs.gov.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=2&ls_id=242&lid=61)

development. Ultimately, the goal is to build a more equitable society where every citizen, especially minorities, has the resources they need to succeed and contribute to the nation's progress.

**Reference:**

- <https://www.minorityaffairs.gov.in/WriteReadData/RTF1984/1659697873.pdf>
- [https://www.minorityaffairs.gov.in/show\\_content.php?lang=1&level=0&ls\\_id=216&lid=221](https://www.minorityaffairs.gov.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=0&ls_id=216&lid=221)
- [https://sansad.in/getFile/annex/265/AU1561\\_HMNueX.pdf?source=pqars](https://sansad.in/getFile/annex/265/AU1561_HMNueX.pdf?source=pqars)
- [https://www.minorityaffairs.gov.in/show\\_content.php?lang=1&level=2&ls\\_id=242&lid=61](https://www.minorityaffairs.gov.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=2&ls_id=242&lid=61)
- <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1797310> (Literacy Rate Among Minorities)

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