

Scheduled Castes (SCs)

10.67 Special Central Assistance (SCA) for the Special Component Plan (SCP) is a major scheme for the welfare and development of SCs. Under the scheme, 100 per cent assistance is extended to supplement the efforts of the States/UTs for ensuring rapid socio-economic development of SCs, especially those living below the poverty line. Allocation for 2005-06 is Rs. 407.36 crore.

10.68 Social empowerment of the disadvantaged groups is being carried out through reduction/removal of prevailing inequalities, disparities and other persisting problems especially in the field of education. The flagship scheme of Post-Matric Scholarships (PMS) to SC students continued to receive high priority. Under the scheme, over and above their committed liability to extend scholarships to all eligible SC students based on a means test, 100 per cent Central Assistance is provided for payment of tuition and compulsory fees, besides maintenance allowance. By November 2005, Rs.378.00 crore benefiting 28.59 lakh SC students had been released under PMS. The Scheme of Pre-Matric Scholarships for children of families engaged in unclean occupation is being

implemented with the objective to promote education and wean these children away from the clutches of their traditional occupations. By January 2006, Rs.10.70 crore was released to benefit 5.54 lakh students. Against an amount of Rs.47.00 crore provided in 2005-06 for construction of hostels for SC boys and girls, expenditure up to January 2006 was Rs.45.00 crore (96 per cent).

10.69 For economic development of these disadvantaged groups through income generating schemes, special financial institutions have been set-up namely: Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSCFDC), National Safai Karamchari Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC), National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC) and National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFDC). The Protection of Civil Rights (PCR) Act, 1955, and the SC & ST Prevention of Atrocities (POA) Act, 1989 are the two important legal instruments to prevent/curb persistent problems of social discrimination, prevalence of social evils like untouchability and cases of exploitation and atrocities against these disadvantaged groups.