

Welfare and Development of Backward Classes and other weaker sections

Scheduled Castes (SCs)

10.66 SCs, constituting 16.23 per cent of the total population of the country (2001 Census), suffer on account of severe socio-economic deprivation arising out of poor asset base, dependence on wage labour, subsistence level of farming, engagement in scavenging and other unclean occupations and related social evils. By way of special interventions, four schemes are being implemented to encourage SC students for continuing their education from school to higher levels. During 2006-07 up to December 31, 2006, Rs. 14.45 crore was released for 5.75 lakh beneficiaries under the Scheme of Pre-Matric Scholarships to the children of those engaged in unclean occupation. The corresponding amount released under the scheme of Post-Matric Scholarships was Rs. 265.20 crore to over

14.70 lakh SC students. For the Up-gradation of Merit of SC students Rs.2.38 crore have been released benefiting 1,371 students. An allocation of Rs. 35.13 crore has been made under Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for SC students for pursuing M.Phil and Ph.D courses against which Rs. 34.18 crore has been released up to December 31, 2006 benefiting 1,333 candidates selected through the University Grants Commission.

10.67 Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan is a major scheme for economic advancement of SC persons. From the allocation of Rs. 450.15 crore for this scheme in 2006-07(BE), up to December 31, 2006, Rs. 296.28 crore had been released to States/UTs, benefiting 1,54,640 persons. National-level Finance and Development Corporations provide credit facilities to the beneficiaries who are living below double the poverty line. Up to December

31, 2006, National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation disbursed Rs. 52.69 crore benefitting 26,990 persons, and National Safaikaramcharis Finance and Development Corporation disbursed Rs. 42.64 crore to 20,099 beneficiaries.

10.68 A new scheme of Self-Employment for Rehabilitation of Scavengers has been approved during the current year to assist those scavengers, who are waiting for rehabilitation and are yet to be assisted, in a time bound manner by March 2009. To abolish the practice of untouchability and curb the high incidence of crimes and atrocities against SCs, efforts are made for effective implementation of the Protection of Civil Rights (PCR) Act, 1955 and the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, with the help of 22 Special Courts under the Protection of Civil Rights (PCR) Act, 1955, and also 137 Special Courts under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

10.69 The strategy of Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCSP) was evolved by the Planning Commission in 1979 to expedite socio-economic development of the SCs. As per the guidelines, SCSP is to be formulated by States/UTs to channelise flow of outlays and benefits in their Plans in proportion to the percentage of SC population to the total population. SCA to SCSP as 100 per cent grant-in-aid to States/UTs who formulate SCSPs continues.

Scheduled Tribes (STs)

10.70 According to the 2001 Census, STs accounted for 84.32 million, equivalent to 8.2 per cent of the country's total population. Compared to the rest of the society, STs continue to be socio-economically backward. The outlay for the welfare and development of STs went up by 10.54 per cent from Rs. 1498.92 crore in 2005-06(RE) to Rs.1615.58 crore in 2006-07(BE). The outlay of 2006-07 includes Rs. 816.71 crore provided as SCA to Tribal-Sub Plan which includes Rs.220 crore for development of forest villages and Rs.400 crore as grant-in-aid under Article

275(1) of the Constitution, which includes Rs.150 crore for minor irrigation of tribal lands.

10.71 SCA to Tribal Sub Plan is a 100 per cent grant extended to States as additional funding to undertake a number of developmental schemes. The focus is on family-oriented income-generating schemes, creation of critical infrastructure, extending financial assistance to SHGs for community-based activities, and development of primitive tribal groups and forest villages. Grant-in-aid under Article 275(1) is also being provided to the States with an objective to promote the welfare of the STs and improve administration in the States to bring them at par with the rest of the States, and to take up such special welfare and development programmes which are otherwise not included in the Plan programmes. Under the flagship scheme of Post-Matric Scholarships, all eligible ST students are provided with stipend to pursue their education beyond matric including professional and graduate and post-graduate courses in recognized institutions. A new scheme of Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for ST students to pursue higher education was launched during 2005-06 and has been entrusted to UGC for implementation. Economic empowerment of STs continued through extension of financial support to the National Scheduled Tribes and Finance Development Corporation (NSTFDC) and the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (TRIFED). Under the scheme of NSTFDC, financial support is being extended to STs beneficiaries/entrepreneurs in the form of term-loans and micro credit at concessional rate of interest for income generating activities. The TRIFED purchases products from STs, thereby strengthening their economic status. To address the problems of tribal communities, who are dependent on forests and to undo the historical injustice done to them, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill, 2006 has been passed by the Parliament in the Winter Session of 2006. This Act recognizes the forest rights of forest dwelling scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers over the forest land under their

occupation for self-cultivation, rights over minor forest produce and traditional rights. A National Tribal Policy 2006 covering all important issues that concern tribals has been drafted and will be finalized shortly .

Minorities

10.72 Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Parsis were declared as Minority communities vide Gazette Notification issued on October 23, 1993 by the Union Government. As per the 2001 Census, these five notified minority communities constitute 18.42 per cent of the country's population. The main factor responsible for socio-economic backwardness of the minority communities, particularly the Muslim community, is the lack of access to the common school system. This is particularly true in the case of Muslim girls. In the financial year 2006-07, the corpus of the Maulana Azad Education Foundation which provides financial assistance to implement educational schemes for the benefit of the educationally backward minorities has been enhanced to Rs. 200 crore from Rs. 100 crore.

10.73 The Union Government set up a High Level Committee on March 9, 2005 headed by Justice Rajinder Sachar for preparation of a report on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community. The Sachar Committee in its report has made 47 recommendations. Some important recommendations relate to measures which should be undertaken for high quality education, specifically for school education of Muslim girls, promoting and enhancing access to Muslims in priority sector advances, imparting training to the minorities for entrepreneurial development, participation of minorities in micro-credit schemes, and introducing CSS and Central Plan Schemes (CPS) for minorities. In addition, provision of basic amenities, good quality government schools and health facilities, pucca approach roads, and general improvement in living conditions (supply of electricity/housing/clean drinking water and sanitation) at all the villages/towns/habitations will serve the overall interest of all communities.

Social Sectors

Other Backward Classes (OBC)

10.74 Government provides central assistance to State Governments/UT Administrations for educational development of Other Backward Classes. Till November 30, 2006, Rs.31.22 crore and Rs. 17.36 crore, respectively, were released to States/UT Administrations against allocations of Rs.34.99 crore under Post Matric Scholarships for OBCs, and of Rs.25.00 crore under Pre Matric Scholarships, respectively. For construction of hostels for OBC boys and girls, the State Governments/UT Administrations/NGOs have been provided with Rs.11.17 crore during the year as Central Assistance. National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation extends credit facilities to persons living below double the poverty line for undertaking various income generating activities. During the year 2006-07 till November 2006, the Corporation has disbursed Rs.54.32 crore benefiting 34,330 persons.

Welfare of Persons with Disabilities

10.75 Out of an allocation of Rs. 243 crore made in 2006-07(BE) for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities, Rs. 105.41 crore has been spent up to November 30, 2006. The programmes are implemented through National and Apex level Institutes dealing with different categories of disabilities such as visual, hearing, orthopaedic and mental. These Institutes conduct short-term and long-term courses for various categories of personnel for providing rehabilitation services to those needing them. Up to November 30, 2006, an amount of Rs 32.03 crore has been released to seven institutes under plan schemes.

10.76 Section 41 of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 stipulates that the appropriate Governments and the local authorities shall, within the limits of their economic capacity and development, provide incentives to employers both in public and private sectors to ensure that at least five per cent of their work force is composed of persons with disabilities. The National Policy

for Persons with Disabilities, which was adopted in 2006, also lays down that proactive measures will be taken to provide incentives, awards, tax exemptions, etc. to encourage employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector. In order to secure employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector, financial incentive at the rate of 20 per cent of the emoluments paid to disabled employees may be reimbursed to an employer. Five Composite Rehabilitation Centres (CRCs) at Srinagar, Lucknow, Bhopal, Guwahati and Sundernagar provide facilities for manpower development and ensuring availability of rehabilitation services for all categories of persons with disabilities. Four Regional Rehabilitation Centres (RRCs) provide services to persons with spinal injuries at Chandigarh, Cuttack, Jabalpur and Bareilly. 199 District Disability Rehabilitation Centres (DDRCs) have been sanctioned in the country for providing comprehensive rehabilitation services at the grass root level. At present, 122 DDRCs are functioning in the country.

10.77 Under the scheme of Assistance to the Disabled for Purchase/ Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP) an amount of Rs.31.35 crore has been released during 2006-2007 up to November 30, 2006. Deen Dayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme provides financial assistance to voluntary organizations for running rehabilitation centres for leprosy-cured persons, for manpower development in the field of mental retardation and cerebral palsy, and establishment and development of special schools for the major areas of orthopaedic, speech, hearing, visual and mental disability. Under this scheme, organizations are given grant-in-aid for both recurring and non-recurring expenditure to the

extent of 90 per cent of the total approved cost of the project. During the year 2006-07, an amount of Rs.32.24 crore has so far been released up to November 30, 2006 to voluntary organizations. National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation provides credit facilities to persons with disability for their economic empowerment.

Social Defence Sector

10.78 To fulfill the commitments of the National Policy on Older Persons for providing health, shelter, vocational training, recreation, and protection of life for the aged, special emphasis is being placed on expanding the on-going programmes of old age homes, day care centres, mobile medicare units and medicare centres being implemented under the scheme of Integrated Programme for Older Persons. During the year 2006-07, an amount of Rs 6 crore has been released under this scheme, up to November 30, 2006. Rigorous efforts are being made to tackle the growing problem of drug abuse and alcoholism through an integrated and comprehensive community based approach in the country. The programme is implemented through voluntary organizations running Treatment-Cum-Rehabilitation Centres and Awareness and Counseling Centres. An amount of Rs.9.50 crore up to November 30, 2006, has been released to voluntary organizations under the scheme of Prevention of Alcoholism and Substance (Drugs) Abuse during the financial year 2006-07. For effective implementation of the programmes, the personnel engaged in delivery of services in these NGOs are being trained under various programmes organized by the National Institute of Social Defence.