

Empowerment of socially disadvantaged groups

10.115 The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment undertakes programmes aimed at ensuring social justice to and empowerment of, the disadvantaged and marginalised sections of society such as Scheduled Castes (SC), minorities, Backward Classes, persons with disabilities, victims of alcoholism and drug abuse, children in need of care and protection and welfare of the aged. The Ministry is also charged with the Constitutional obligation of ensuring effective implementation of laws passed for the protection of the interests of these groups. The areas covering the Ministry are also areas where a major role is played by the State Governments.

10.116 For the Tenth Five Year Plan an allocation of Rs.8,530 crore has been made available. In the Tenth Plan the focus would be on equitable distribution and growth with social justice, through a three-pronged strategy i.e. *social empowerment* through removing all the persisting inequalities, disparities and other problems besides providing easy access to basic minimum services; *economic empowerment* through promotion of employment-cum-income generation activities and *social justice* through eliminating all types of discrimination with the strength of legislative support, affirmative action, awareness generation and requisite change in the mind –set of people.

10.117 As against an allocation of Rs.1,332.70 crore for Plan schemes in 2001-02 (BE), Rs.1,410 crore have been made available for Annual Plan 2002-03. An enhanced Central Pool Allocation of Rs.1,049.13 crore has been provided for the welfare of SCs, OBCs and Minorities. The allocation for Welfare of Persons with Disabilities and Social Defence during 2002-03 is Rs.206.55 crore and Rs.90.45 crore respectively. An amount of Rs.63.87 crore has been allocated under lumpsum provision for the North East and Sikkim.

Scheduled castes

10.118 Special Central Assistance for the Special Component Plan is a major scheme

for the welfare of the Scheduled Castes. During 2002-03, an allocation of Rs.371.62 crore has been made under this scheme and Rs.188.74 crore utilized upto November 30, 2002. The formulation and implementation of this Scheme is being monitored intensively.

10.119 As education is the prime requirement for the educational empowerment of Scheduled Castes, efforts are being made to arrest the school drop-out rates and improve enrolment and retention rates through provision of scholarships, hostel facilities and other educational aids and support. During the Ninth Plan period, the scheme of Post Matric Scholarships has benefitted 15 lakh SC students. The scheme of hostel facilities has benefitted 25,196 SC girls and 17,244, SC boys through the setting up of 354 girls' hostels and 388 boys' hostels respectively. During 2002-03 (up to November 30, 2002), Rs.1.84 crore has been released for 2.03 lakh (anticipated) beneficiaries under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Pre-Matric Scholarship to the children of those engaged in unclean occupations. Rs.75.33 crore has been released under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of post matric Scholarship to the anticipated number of 12.88 lakh (expected) SC students. Rs.5.32 crore has been released for construction of SC Boys/Girls Hostels against an allocation of Rs.43 crore, Rs.1.85 crore for Book Banks for 333 SC students, Rs.0.62 crore for Upgradation of Merit of 82 SC students and Rs.1.86 crore for Coaching and Allied activities.

10.120 To abolish the practice of untouchability and curb the high incidence of crimes and atrocities against SCs, efforts are made through 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 PCR Act 1,955 and 113 Special Courts under SC and ST (POA) Act, 1989.

10.121 There are about 6.53 lakh scavengers in the country. Under the National Scheme for Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers Rs.661.99 crore has been released for assisting 1,46,840 scavengers for

training and 3,84,117 scavengers for rehabilitation upto 2000-01. Sanitary marts have been set-up with the objective of organizing scavengers into groups/cooperatives to take up economically viable activities. These marts would cater to the sanitary needs of the common man and work for the conversion of dry latrines to sanitary latrines. Sanitary marts are being operated in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. In Rajasthan about 2,000 shop premises are being built exclusively for the rehabilitation of scavengers.

10.122 The Constitution [Scheduled Castes] order [Amendment] Bill, 2002 has been passed by the Parliament to include certain communities of Punjab, Orissa and West Bengal to be eligible for the benefits available to the members of Scheduled Castes under Article 341 of the Constitution.

10.123 The Constitution [Scheduled Castes] order [Amendment] Bill, 2002 has been passed by the Parliament to ensure continued benefits to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes oustees from Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra displaced due to Sardar Sarovar Project and settled in Gujarat.

Backward classes

10.124 Out of a total allocation of Rs.68.85 crore for the year 2002-03, an amount of Rs.28.28 crore has been released to the State Governments under various schemes for the welfare of the backward classes. The National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation has launched a scheme "*New Swarnima*" for women belonging to backward classes living below the poverty line. Under this scheme financial assistance to the extent of Rs.50,000 per beneficiary is provided at a concessional rate of interest of 4 percent per annum.

Minorities

10.125 Out of the total allocation of Rs.35.46 crore for 2002-03, Rs.21.29 crore has been released under various schemes for the welfare of minorities. A new scheme "*Mahila Samridhi Yojana*" for providing Micro-Financing for training to women belonging to the minority communities in tailoring, knitting, embroidery

and allied trades has been launched by the National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation. The Corporation has also introduced a new scheme for providing educational loans at concessional rates to students for pursuing job oriented, professional and technical courses.

Scheduled tribes

10.126 The Ministry of Tribal Affairs, set up in October 1999 is the nodal Ministry for the overall policy, planning and coordination of programmes for the development of Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Areas (Vth and VIth Schedules), scheduling and de-scheduling of tribes, as also the promotion of voluntary efforts in tribal development. According to the 1991 Census, the population of Scheduled Tribes in the country is 67.8 million i.e, 8.1 percent of the total population and is estimated at approximately 88.8 million by 2001, representing 8.6 percent of the country's total population. The tribal development initiatives focus on areas such as income generation, infrastructure development in tribal areas, educational development, employment oriented training, ensuring fair price and food security, promoting voluntary efforts, development of Primitive Tribal Groups, support to Tribal Development and Finance Corporations at the National and State level, and research.

10.127 The approach for the Tenth Plan (2002-07) and the Annual Plan (2002-03), being the first year of the Tenth Plan, will be to 'Resolve the Unresolved Issues' and 'Solve the Persisting Problems'. The strategy adopted in the Annual Plan 2002-03 included: (i) Protecting the tribals from land alienation and the related problems of indebtedness and exploitation; (ii) Expediting the final pronouncement of the 'National Policy for Rehabilitation of the Displaced Persons' with a special focus on the displaced tribals; (iii) Promote tribal participation in forest centered activities and thereby stimulate the tribal economy without alienating tribals from the forest; (iv) For protecting the precarious Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs), the ongoing schemes will be further expanded with

effective involvement of voluntary organizations; (v) Ensure Tribal participation in the development process by democratising the decision making process by strengthening the grass-root democratic institutions

10.128 As against an expenditure of Rs.995.53 crore during 2001-02, Rs.1,090 crore has been made available for various schemes/programmes during Annual Plan 2002-03. An amount of Rs.500 crore has been provided under the scheme of Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) focussing on income generating activities in the tribal areas and creation of critical infrastructure incidental thereto. In addition an exclusive grant in aid is being provided under article 275(1) of the Constitution of India to ensure development of need based infrastructure so as to enhance the capacity of the economy in tribal areas to meaningfully and effectively absorb funds for overall development. The specific project schemes prepared on the basis of the integrated and holistic area planning are being approved specifically targeted to enhance the human development indices of the Scheduled Tribes. An amount of Rs.300 crore has been made available in the current year.

10.129 The Annual Plan (2002-03) emphasises educational development of Scheduled Tribes (STs) through the many multiple support schemes for improving the enrolment ratio as well as retention of ST students. These schemes include Post-Matric Scholarships (benefitting 5.31 lakh ST students in the Ninth Plan); Hostels for ST girls and boys (benefitting 10,649 girls through 289 hostels and 13,958 boys through 317 hostels in the Ninth Plan). 294 Ashram schools exist to accommodate 14,310 students.

10.130 As food and nutrition security is of vital importance for the survival and good health of tribals especially the Primitive Tribal Groups, the Annual Plan 2002-03 has laid emphasis on expansion of the programmes of Special Nutrition Programme through ICDS, Mid-day Meal Scheme and Targetted Public Distribution System.

10.131 As a measure towards ensuring a remunerative price and food security for tribals, the Ministry provides 100 percent grant-in-aid to State Tribal Development Cooperative Corporations, Forest Development Corporation, Minor Forest Produce (Trading and Development) Federation for Minor Forest Produce (MFP) operations. Against an allocation of Rs.12 crore for 2001-02, Rs.11.71 crore has been disbursed upto January 31, 2002.

10.132 Grain Golas (Banks) in tribal areas are as a part of the Government interventions to prevent starvation deaths. This Scheme aims at providing a safeguard against non-availability of foodgrains in remote tribal areas, promotion of self-help efforts as also ensuring the availability of foodgrains during natural calamities. Since inception, 534 grain banks have been established in 12 States. Out of the provision of Rs.2 crore for 2001-02, the entire amount has been released as on January 31, 2002.

10.133 A Commission under Article 339 of the Constitution of India has been appointed to report on the administration of the scheduled areas and the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes. Since the needs of the Scheduled Tribe population are quite distinct due to the special characteristics, it is also proposed to bifurcate the existing National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commission into two separate Commissions dealing with matters related to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes exclusively.

10.134 In the sphere of economic development the National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance & Development Corporation (NSFDC) has continued to support income-generation activities through its financing schemes. In April, 2001, in order to give focussed attention to STs, the NSFDC was bifurcated and an exclusive Corporation for STs, namely, the National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC) has been incorporated. This is an apex institution for financing schemes/projects for economic development of the STs. The Corporation has an authorised share capital

of Rs.500 crore. An amount of Rs.32 crore has been provided during the current financial year for providing Central Assistance towards share capital of the NSTFDC and the State Tribal Development Corporations (STDS). Realising the importance and the central role played by women, specially in the tribal communities, an exclusive scheme namely, *Adivasi Mahila Sashastikaran Yojana*, has been started for the upliftment of the tribal women in a more focussed manner. Under the scheme, the NSTFDC provides term loan through the State Channelising Agencies (SCAs) for the schemes/projects costing up

to Rs.50,000 per unit at a concessional interest rate of 4 percent.

10.135 In tune with the saying that “seeing is believing” a new Central Sector Scheme of *“Exchange of visits by Tribals”* has been started. Scheduled tribe members can visit another State for a period of 10-12 days, thereby enhancing exposure of the tribal population to more advanced and developed areas of the country, and enables them to reap the benefits of sharing of experiences during such visits. An amount of Rs.20 lakhs has been provided under the scheme.