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Expedite categorisation of denotified, nomadic, semi-nomadic tribes: House panel

Delay would increase their suffering and deprive them of welfare schemes, Parliamentary panel on Social Justice and Empowerment said

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The SEED (Scheme for Economic Empowerment of DNTs) scheme was launched by Union Social Justice Minister Virendra Kumar. | Photo Credit: Twitter/@Drvirendrakum13

The Parliamentary panel on Social Justice and Empowerment has pulled up the Union government over the “very slow” process to categorise over 260 denotified, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes under either the SC/ST/OBC lists, which government officials have pointed to for the delay in the approval of benefits under the SEED (Scheme for Economic Empowerment of DNTs) scheme launched in February this year.

The scheme was launched by Union Social Justice Minister Virendra Kumar, with the aim of providing free competitive exam coaching, health insurance, housing assistance, and livelihood initiatives. An amount of ₹200 crore has been allocated for this scheme — to be spent over five years from FY2021-22 to FY2025-26.

As of December 26 evening, a total of over 5,400 applications had been received under the SEED scheme, none of which have been approved and no amount has been sanctioned.

The panel, in a report tabled in Parliament this Winter Session, noted that it had earlier too flagged the “inability of the Department to take necessary action” on the speedy and accurate categorisation of these communities.

After the government said that the work was proceeding and would be finished by 2022, the panel said the process was still very slow. It added, “Delay in locating them would increase their suffering and they would not be able to get benefit of the prevailing Schemes meant for the welfare of SC/STs.”

The panel further said it expects the government to expedite this exercise and finish it in a time-bound manner and sought detailed timelines for the same.

Department’s response

In response to the panel’s concerns, the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment had submitted that the Anthropological Survey of India had submitted reports on categorisation of 48 DNT communities so far. In addition, of the 267 communities not categorised so far, the AnSI has finished studies on 24 communities, with Tribal Research Institutes studying 12 of the communities. Further, the AnSI is finalising studies on 161 communities and is expected to finish studying the remaining communities (about 70) by the end of 2022.

More than 10 crore Indians from over 1,400 communities are either denotified, nomadic or semi-nomadic. Of this, the Idate Commission had categorised 1,262 communities under SC/ST/OBC lists and 267 communities were left uncategorised. Even the communities

categorised by the Idate Commission are **not accurate with many communities appearing in SC lists in one State or district and on the ST list in others.**

Officials of the Development and Welfare Board for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi Nomadic Communities (DWBDNC) have highlighted that they cannot begin processing the applications for the SEED scheme unless the State and district-level reviews are completed and it is at this level that the inaccurate categorisation of communities is leading to hiccups in the approval process, *The Hindu* had reported earlier this year.

The scheme was launched along with a system for online applications and live status-tracking. However, with many denotified, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities unable to navigate the online system themselves, officials from the ministry and the DWBDNC have **been conducting camps across the country with community leaders to help the applicants sign up on the web portal.** **But unless the bureaucratic exercise of their accurate categorisation is completed, the application will not be processed,** officials said.



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