

TRIBE CATEGORISATION WORK DELAYS SEED

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of Minorities Incl. Linguistic Minorities - Schemes & their performance; Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions & Bodies

Long-running issue: A protest in Tamil Nadu demanding community certificates as denotified tribes. File photo

Till 8 p.m. on Monday, the Union Social Justice Ministry received 402 applications online from across the country for benefits under the Scheme for Economic Empowerment of Denotified, Nomadic, Semi-nomadic (SEED) Tribes. More than 10 crore Indians from 1,400 communities belong to these groups, show the latest estimates available with the government.

None of the applications received so far on the SEED's online portal has been approved yet. Multiple officials say the exercise to categorise all 1,400 communities under the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Other Backward Classes is holding up the implementation of the scheme, unveiled in February by Social Justice Minister Virendra Kumar.

Welfare options

The scheme aims to provide free competitive exam coaching to students, health insurance and financial assistance for housing and uplift clusters of these communities through livelihood initiatives. The Ministry has been allocated Rs. 200 crore for this scheme to be spent over five financial years from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

At the time of the launch, the Ministry announced that the scheme would be implemented through an online portal that would issue a unique ID to each applicant to apply and track the status of the application online.

Of the applications received on the portal so far, 17 are for free coaching, 111 for health insurance, 222 for housing, and 52 for livelihood assistance, the Ministry said.

The applications are still being reviewed at the State and district levels, officials said.

While the Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) and Tribal Research Institutes are studying 267 uncategorised communities to classify them under SC, ST, or OBC, inconsistencies have been hindering the processing of SEED applications. The categorisation of these communities by the Idate Commission left room for inaccuracies as outlined by the commission in its 2018 report.

For instance, some communities such as the Banjara were under the SC list in Delhi, the ST list in Rajasthan and the OBC list in Uttar Pradesh.

The commission said some communities were under different lists in different districts even within a State.

NITI Aayog officials monitoring the exercise told *The Hindu*, "The AnSI is expected to submit reports on all the communities by October."

Government officials said the categorisation of DNTs, NTs and SNTs is essential for the implementation of SEED because there is no schedule in the Constitution providing for their reservation. "So, we are asking State governments to uniformly categorise these communities under SC, ST, or OBC lists and then provide a sub-categorisation in their certificates, declaring

them as either DNT, NT, or SNT,” an official said.

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