MEA seeks details of U.S. programme

A day after the United States announced a funded programme for organisations interested in fighting religious intolerance in India, the Ministry of External Affairs said such funding would have to conform to legal processes at home and sought more details.

The statement from the MEA came even as the U.S. Embassy in India maintained that the fund would improve civilian security.

"We have requested for more details [from the U.S.]. Once we have more details, we will be in a better position to comment on this. But in any case, any such activity in India, in this area, by anybody has to follow the rule of the land," MEA spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said.

The MEA would look into the context in which the U.S. had pledged the amount, he said.

Religious tolerance

The Ministry's response came a day after the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor announced a competition-based programme through which suitable organisations willing to counter religious intolerance in India would get funds amounting to $4,93,827.

The programme which has called for applications from interested organisations is understandably aimed at countering majoritarian acts of discrimination and violence targeting the minority communities.

The MEA spokesperson refused to interpret the announcement at the moment but it is understood that those who will win the grant for their programmes will have to seek clearance from the Indian government before undertaking any work.

Explaining the nature of the grant, the U.S. Embassy's spokesperson said: "This programme is funded by U.S. government foreign assistance funds. The goal of the programme is to increase societal tolerance and improve civilian security to reduce religiously-motivated violence and discrimination, and funds will support activities that work toward that end."

Any such activity in India by anybody has to follow the rule of the land

Raveesh Kumar

MEA spokesperson