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Govt orders survey of minorities in city

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY: Muslims irked by state minorities panel idea, say it's an eyewash

Express News Service

Mumbai, March 19: The Maharashtra government has ordered a socio-economic survey of minorities in Mumbai through the Maharashtra State Minorities Commission (MSMC), which will use the services of the **Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)**. However, the move has evoked a cynical response from leaders of minority communities.

According to the vice-chairperson of the commission, Abraham Mathai, the State government has sanctioned Rs 7.30 lakh for the survey. "The survey will look at the choice of education, dropout rates, access to education for minorities etc," he said.

"It will also explore the impact of riots and other external factors like bomb blasts on communities, ghettoisation, inter-community relationships and cover areas of community resource mobilisation," Mathai added.

The survey is scheduled to be completed within a year by **TISS**. Based on the data and its analysis, the commission would then make recommendations to the government.

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However, the idea of the survey hasn't gone down well with leaders from minority communities. "Why do we need a fresh survey?" State NCP general secretary Munaf Hakim said. "Several independent surveys have been conducted and we all know that illiteracy and socio-economic backwardness

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among Muslims is more than other communities.”

More than the survey, Hakim stressed on the implementation of recommendations that follow. “What is the point of conducting a survey and keeping the findings in cold storage?” he asked.

He pointed out that the Democratic Front government, which revived the state minorities commission, was yet to appoint its members. “So far the government has appointed only the chairman and vice-chairman. What about the other eight members?”

Anwar Amir, a Muslim intellectual, reacted similarly. Associated with the Maharashtra Muslim Parishad, he said, “It’s an eyewash. If the government honestly wants to do something, it should first give more powers, including judicial powers, to the minorities commission. Then, it should act on the recommendations of the Sachar Committee.”

The numbers

According to the 2001 census, Maharashtra has a population of 9.69 crore of which:

- * 80.4 per cent are Hindus,
- * 10.6 per cent Muslims,
- * 1.1 per cent Christians,
- * 6.1 per cent Buddhists,
- * 0.2 per cent Sikhs,
- * 1.3 per cent Jains