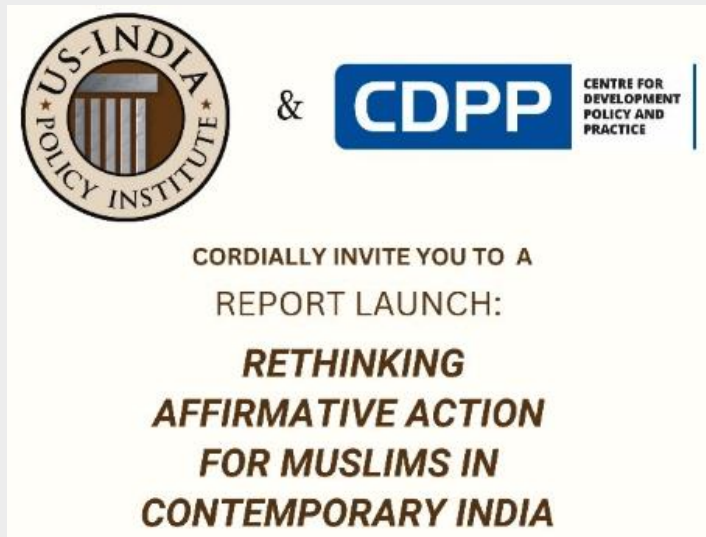


**1. What a major new report on the status of Muslims in India has found****Why now?**

The report, 'Rethinking Affirmative Action for Muslims in Contemporary India,' has carried out a stocktake of the government's policies and programs on affirmative action for Muslims. The report has also put forth a roadmap for the future. It is the first comprehensive policy document of its kind in the last 10 years.

The Centre for Development Policy & Practice (CDPP), in collaboration with the US-India Policy Institute (USIPI) launched the report. Centre

for Development Policy and Practice is an independent research institution working on economic and public policy issues with a focus on the development on vulnerable populations.

**Policy on India's Muslims**

In June 2006, the UPA government approved the Prime Minister's 15-point Program for Minorities to initiate a series of minority-centric policies and schemes. That January, a new Ministry of Minority Affairs had been carved out of the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.

Earlier, in October 2004 and March 2005, the government had appointed the National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities (Justice Ranganath Misra Commission) and a High Level Committee on Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India (Justice Rajinder Sachar Committee) respectively.

Both the Sachar Committee, which submitted its report in 2006, and the Ranganath Misra Commission, which submitted its report in 2007, strongly recommended that Muslims should be treated as a marginalized community.

Over time, the government introduced several policy initiatives for the socio-economic uplift of Muslim communities.

**Change in approach**

The BJP led-NDA government that came to power that year adopted the ideal of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas for the social inclusion of all groups and communities. It initiated significant changes in the policy framework, and restructured existing programmes and schemes led by

the Ministry of Minority Affairs. In the post-2014 policy framework, Muslim empowerment is not treated as an exclusive concern.

### **Approach of new report**

The report has four broad themes.

First, it examines the changing nature of the state and its official perspective on social welfare.

Second, it maps out the contemporary policy framework and its implications for Muslims by critically engaging with official documents, mainly those published by NITI Aayog.

Third, it surveys the educational and economic status of Muslim communities by analysing official data collected from different sources.

Fourth, it explores the perceptions, expectations, aspirations, and anxieties of Muslims about their socio-economic backwardness and marginalisation.

### **What is the present educational status of Muslims?**

School-age children from Muslim households are the least likely to participate in upper levels of schooling, although their participation has increased in recent years.

The participation of Muslim youths in the post-secondary level remains the lowest among all socio-religious groups (SRGs). The share of graduates among Muslims remains small.

### **What is the position of Muslims in the job market?**

In terms of the levels of consumption and asset ownership, a large section of Muslims continue to face material deprivation.

While all other disadvantaged SRGs have improved their position in the labour market through a measure of upward mobility in the employment structure over time, the gains have been the least for Muslims.

### **What can be done to address this situation?**

The new report proposes two broad principles for a revised interpretation of affirmative action for Muslims: strong secularization of social policy, and a positive, non-discriminatory official portrayal of Muslim cultural identity. Based on these principles, the report makes seven specific recommendations.

First, there is no need for a religion-based quota under the OBC category. A rational, secular sub-categorization of OBC is needed.

Second, the SC category must include Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians as well.

Third, the existing 50% cap on reservation must be re-evaluated on a rational basis to accommodate new backward communities in the affirmative action framework.

Four, the convergence of Transformation of Aspirational District Programme (TADP) and the Minority Concentration District (MCD) is one of the main findings of this study. This space-centric approach to affirmative action should be the basis for engaging with a diversified set of local-level programs.

Five, a conscious and proactive policy may be designed to address the problems of those occupations in which Muslims are disproportionately, if not exclusively, represented.

Six, the private sector must be involved in the discussions on community empowerment.

Seven, the capacity-building of Muslim community organisations, charities, and self-help groups must be prioritised. It might help them to establish links with ongoing welfare programs and policies.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## 2. PM Modi chairs his first Wildlife Board meeting

### Why in News?

More than 10 years after assuming office, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired his first-ever meeting of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) last week, on World Wildlife Day on March 3.

The last full-body NBWL meeting was held on September 5, 2012, chaired by then PM Manmohan Singh. The PM is the ex officio chairman of the NBWL.



### Formation of NBWL

The present-day National Board for Wildlife was created in 2003 after amending The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

The NBWL basically restructured the Indian Board for Wildlife (IBWL), established in 1952. The intent was to give it more teeth by making it a statutory body and giving it a more regulatory character to implement the Wild Life Protection Act.

The NBWL is the country's apex body on matters of framing wildlife policy, conservation of wildlife and forests, and on giving recommendations to set up new national parks and sanctuaries.

### **Large Membership**

The NBWL consists of 47 members with the Prime Minister as its chairperson and the Union environment minister its vice-chairperson. Senior members include Chief of the Army Staff; secretaries of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the Department of Expenditure of the Ministry of Finance; three Lok Sabha MPs; one Rajya Sabha MP; and the Director General of Forest.

Ten eminent conservationists, ecologists and environmentalists and five persons from the non-governmental sector are also appointed to the board.

### **Standing Committee**

The NBWL has a standing committee, to which are delegated key tasks such as appraising projects situated on forest lands inside and around national parks and sanctuaries as well as projects within 10-km of protected areas. The standing committee's decisions are recommendatory, which the environment ministry can overrule.

### **Why has the board recently faced criticism?**

**1. Clearance to Projects:** Over the past decade, the NBWL has cleared several development projects in and around wildlife habitats, leading to controversy and protests from ecologists.

These include the Ken-Betwa river linking project's Daudhan Dam, which will submerge nearly 100 sqkm of Panna National Park and Tiger Reserve, and an oil exploration project of Vedanta in the eco-sensitive zone of the Hollongapar Gibbon sanctuary, home to the endangered Hoolock Gibbon, India's only ape species. Also, in 2021, the Galathea Bay Sanctuary in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a nesting site of leatherback sea turtles, was denotified.

**2. Change in Composition:** After the BJP government came to power in 2014, the NBWL was reconstituted. The move faced allegations of dilution of powers, as only three non-governmental members were appointed.

**3. Lack of Quorum:** Since 2014, the standing committee has held 50 meetings without the requisite number of conservation experts and non-governmental members.

**4. Only 7th full body meeting:** Modi's meeting at Gir was the 7th full-body NBWL meeting. Of the previous six, five were chaired by Manmohan Singh and the first one was chaired by Atal Bihari Vajpayee on October 15, 2003.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: Indian Express

### 3. PM receives the highest Civilian Award of Mauritius at the National Day Celebrations

#### Introduction

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi attended the 57th National Day celebrations of the Republic of Mauritius as the Chief Guest. During the National Day celebrations, an Indian Navy marching contingent participated in the parade.



#### Highest civilian award of Mauritius

During the celebrations, President of the Republic of Mauritius H.E. Mr. Dharambeer Gokhool conferred the Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean (G.C.S.K) award, the highest civilian award of Mauritius, on Prime Minister Modi. This is the first time that an Indian leader is receiving this honour.

Relevance: GS Prelims; International Relations

Source: PIB

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