

PROCEEDINGS OF MEETING NO. 27

Celebration of Interfaith Harmony Day (National Level)

Conference of State Minority Commissions

Date: 25 March 2025

Venue: Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, 15 Janpath, New Delhi – 110001

Organised by: National Commission for Minorities (NCM),
Government of India

Background

The National Commission for Minorities (NCM), a statutory body constituted in 1993 under the Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India, convened **Meeting No. 27** in the form of a **National-level Conference of State Minority Commissions** to mark the **Celebration of Interfaith Harmony Day**.

The conference aimed to strengthen interfaith dialogue, promote communal harmony, and deliberate upon policy, welfare, and institutional challenges faced by minorities across States and Union Territories.

INAUGURAL SESSION

09:30 AM – Arrival of Invitees and Delegates

Delegates from State Minority Commissions, senior officials of the Ministry of Minority Affairs, representatives of various

faith communities, academicians, and civil society members arrived and registered for the conference.

10:00 AM – Arrival of Guest of Honour

Shri **George Kurian**, Hon'ble Minister of State for Minority Affairs, Government of India, arrived at the venue and was received by senior officials of NCM.

10:00 AM – 10:05 AM | Lighting of the Lamp

The inaugural session commenced with the traditional **lighting of the ceremonial lamp** by the Hon'ble Guest of Honour, symbolising enlightenment, unity, and shared spiritual values across faiths.

10:05 AM – 10:10 AM | Welcome Address

The **Secretary / Joint Secretary, National Commission for Minorities**, extended a warm welcome to the Hon'ble Minister, Chairman NCM, Chairpersons and Members of State Minority Commissions, and all delegates. The address highlighted the constitutional mandate of NCM and underscored the importance of **interfaith harmony as the foundation of India's pluralistic democracy**.

10:10 AM – 10:20 AM | Address by Chairman, NCM

Shri **Iqbal Singh Lalpura**, Chairman, National Commission for Minorities, delivered the keynote address. He emphasized:

- India's civilizational ethos of **unity in diversity**,
- The vital role of State Minority Commissions in safeguarding minority rights,
- The need for institutional coordination and policy convergence, and
- The relevance of interfaith dialogue in addressing contemporary social challenges.

He called upon all stakeholders to work collectively to uphold constitutional values of equality, fraternity, and justice.

10:20 AM – 10:40 AM | Address by the Guest of Honour

Shri **George Kurian**, Hon'ble Minister of State for Minority Affairs, addressed the gathering and appreciated the initiative of NCM in organizing the national-level celebration of **Interfaith Harmony Day**. He highlighted:

- Government initiatives for minority welfare and inclusion,
- The importance of education, skill development, and social empowerment, and
- The role of interfaith cooperation in fostering national integration and peace.

The Hon'ble Minister urged State Minority Commissions to act as proactive institutions promoting harmony and inclusive development.

10:40 AM – 11:00 AM | Tea Break

Participants interacted informally and exchanged views during the tea break.

TECHNICAL SESSION – I

11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Theme: *Education: Ensuring Access and Support to Minorities*

The session was conducted in the form of a **Panel Discussion**, followed by an interactive **Question and Answer Session**.

Key deliberations focused on:

- Access to quality education for minority communities,
- Scholarships and educational support schemes,
- Addressing regional and socio-economic disparities, and
- Best practices adopted by various States.

Panelists and delegates shared field experiences and made constructive recommendations to strengthen minority education frameworks.

TECHNICAL SESSION – II

12:30 PM – 02:00 PM

Theme: *Minority Inclusion and Welfare: Role of Government for Inclusion, Empowerment and Development*

This session comprised:

- A **Panel Discussion**, and
- A **Question and Answer Session**.

Discussions centered on:

- Policy implementation challenges,
- Welfare schemes and grassroots outreach,
- Strengthening State Minority Commissions, and
- Enhancing coordination between Central and State agencies.

*As part of the **Technical Sessions** of the Conference, a **Panel Discussion on Interfaith Harmony, Social Cohesion and Constitutional Values** was held, featuring eminent speakers **Dr. Jaswinder Singh Dhillon** and **Col. Jaibans Singh**. The session was attended by Chairpersons and Members of State Minority Commissions, senior officials, representatives of faith communities, academicians, and civil society members.*

Address by Dr. Jaswinder Singh Dhillon

*Dr. Jaswinder Singh Dhillon, while addressing the panel, emphasized that **interfaith harmony is deeply rooted in India's civilizational ethos** and constitutional framework. He highlighted the historical role played by various religious traditions in nurturing mutual respect, coexistence, and collective progress.*

Dr. Dhillon underscored the importance of:

- *Continuous dialogue among faith communities,*
- *Promoting inclusive education that reflects shared human values, and*
- *Strengthening the role of institutions such as **State Minority Commissions** in conflict prevention and social mediation.*

*He stressed that harmony cannot be achieved merely through policy measures but requires **people-centric engagement**, cultural understanding, and ethical leadership. He further observed that interfaith cooperation is essential for addressing contemporary challenges such as social polarization, misinformation, and communal mistrust.*

Address by Col. Jaibans Singh

*Col. Jaibans Singh, in his address, spoke on **national unity, internal security, and the strategic importance of interfaith harmony**. Drawing from his experience in*

public affairs and national security, he emphasized that social cohesion and mutual trust among communities are critical for a stable and strong nation.

He highlighted that:

- *Interfaith harmony strengthens **national integration and democratic resilience**,*
- *Marginalization and misunderstanding can be countered through **institutional outreach and awareness**, and*
- *State Minority Commissions play a vital role in **early identification and resolution of grievances**.*

*Col. Singh emphasized the need for **collaborative action** between government institutions, religious leaders, and civil society to reinforce values of tolerance, mutual respect, and constitutional morality.*

Interactive Discussion

The panel discussion was followed by an interactive session, during which participants from various State Minority Commissions shared experiences, challenges, and best practices related to interfaith engagement at the grassroots level. The panelists responded to queries concerning policy implementation, community outreach, and institutional coordination.

Outcome

*The panel discussion concluded with a collective reaffirmation that **interfaith harmony is a shared responsibility**, requiring sustained dialogue, institutional commitment, and community participation. The insights and recommendations emerging from the discussion were noted by the National Commission for Minorities for future policy consideration and action.*

02:00 PM – 03:00 PM | Lunch (Valedictory Session)

Lunch was hosted for all participants, during which informal discussions continued.

POST-LUNCH SESSION

03:00 PM – 03:05 PM | Arrival of Chief Guest

Shri **Kiren Rijiju**, Hon'ble Union Minister of Minority Affairs, arrived at the venue and was accorded a warm welcome.

03:05 PM – 03:30 PM | Address by the Chief Guest

The Hon'ble Union Minister addressed the gathering, reiterating the Government's commitment to:

- Inclusive governance,

- Minority welfare and empowerment, and
- Strengthening interfaith harmony as a pillar of national unity.

03:30 PM – 05:30 PM | Open House Discussion

An extensive **Open House Discussion** was held on issues faced by **State Minority Commissions**, including:

- Administrative and financial constraints,
- Jurisdictional challenges,
- Need for capacity building, and
- Suggestions for policy reforms.

Delegates from various States presented their concerns and recommendations, which were duly noted by NCM.

VALEDICTORY SESSION

05:30 PM | Valedictory Address

The conference concluded with the **Valedictory Address by Shri Iqbal Singh Lalpura**, Chairman, NCM. summarized the key outcomes of the conference, thanked all dignitaries and participants, and expressed confidence that the deliberations would contribute meaningfully to **interfaith harmony and minority empowerment** across the country.

Conclusion

The national-level celebration of **Interfaith Harmony Day** under **Meeting No. 27** concluded successfully with a reaffirmation of collective commitment to constitutional values, social cohesion, and inclusive development.



