

State of Muslims, Dalits dismal: Report

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On the heels of the Sachar Committee report on the socio-economic status of Muslims, the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) has come out with data about the economic status of Muslims that makes dismal reading.

Nearly one third of Muslims in the nation survive on less than Rs 550 a month, NCAER says and adds that three out of every 10 Muslims were below poverty line and lived on less than Rs 550 a month in the year 2004-05.

Even among the poor, urban Muslims were better off compared to those in villages, who survived on Rs 338 a month during the year under review, NCAER said in a report last week.

"The Adivasis are the most vulnerable group with nearly 50 per cent below the poverty line...(followed by) the Dalits and Muslims with poverty rates of 32 per cent and 31 per cent," said the Indian Human Development survey conducted by the NCAER and University of Maryland of the US.

The survey took the poverty line at Rs 356 per person per month in rural areas and at Rs 538 in urban areas for 2004-05. Besides, the survey said Muslims are at the bottom in terms of rural household income.

However, in the country, Muslim households are slightly better off than Dalits and Adivasis as a whole.

"Adivasi and Dalit households have the lowest annual income at Rs 20,000 and Rs 22,800, respectively. The other backward classes and Muslim households are slightly better off, with incomes of Rs 26,091 and Rs 28,500," the report said.

As per the 2001 census, there were 13.8 crore Muslims, accounting for 13.4 per cent of the total population of India.

The survey said Muslims are most likely to generate income from small family businesses, partly because of educational differences across the community. It said social group differences in enrolment were striking.

Dalit, Adivasi and Muslim children were far less likely to enroll in schools and were slightly more likely to drop out than others, the survey said.