

Govt expands minority devpt plan to 308 districts from 196

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The BJP-led central government is expanding the reach of a scheme to improve socio-economic infrastructure for minorities in education, health and skill development from 196 to 308 districts of the country.

From 27 states and UTs, the programme, which was last year allocated Rs 3,972 crore to be spent over three years, will now be implemented in districts across 32 states and UTs. "Between 33% and 40% of resources under the PMJVK (Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram) would be

Investment cap under 8% pension plan hiked

The government on Wednesday decided to double the investment limit under the Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana – a pension scheme for senior citizens that offers 8% assured returns – to Rs 15 lakh in a bid to ensure monthly payouts of up to Rs 10,000. The decision follows a budget announcement. **P 10**

specifically allocated for women-centric projects," said the ministry of minority affairs, adding, "It is an attempt to

reduce the gap between the national average and minority communities on backwardness parameters".

Put together, the additions represent a 57% increase in the coverage area. The states with the highest number of districts which will benefit from the PMJVK are Uttar Pradesh (43), Maharashtra (27), Karnataka, Bengal and Rajasthan (16 each), Gujarat, Arunachal Pradesh, Kerala (13 each), Tamil Nadu (12), Madhya Pradesh (8), Haryana and Manipur (7 each) and Punjab (2).

► **Rationalises norms, P 14**

Centre rationalises criteria

The Multi-sectoral Development Programme (MsDP), which was launched in 2008, has now been restructured as the PMJVK and will now cover five more states and UTs: Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Nagaland, Goa and Puducherry. Besides, 61 “aspirational districts” — the most backward ones which have concentrations of minorities — have also been brought under its purview.

While expanding the scheme, the government “rationalised” the criteria for identification of minority concentration towns (MCTs) and village clusters. The government has decided to lower the population percentage criteria for the communities and fulfilment of backwardness parameters. In its statement, the ministry stated that 80% of the resources under the PMJVK would be earmarked for projects related to education, health and skill development.

Earlier, only those towns that were found backward in terms of both basic amenities and socio-economic parameters were taken up as MCTs. Now towns found to be backward in either or both criteria will be taken up as MCTs. Another change involves the population percentage in village clusters. Earlier, only those clusters of villages where minorities made up at least 50% of the population were taken up. Now criterion has been lowered to 25%.

MsDP, now named PMJVK, was designed primarily to address the developmental gaps/deficits in identified minority concentration areas by topping up existing centrally sponsored schemes without any change in norms and funding patterns.