



Delays in Submitting Constitutional Commission Reports

For Prelims: [Scheduled Castes \(SCs\)](#), [Scheduled Tribes \(STs\)](#), [Other Backward Classes \(OBCs\)](#), [United Nations Universal Periodic Review](#)

For Mains: Impact of delayed reports on welfare policies for marginalized communities, India's statistical systems

[Source:TH](#)

Why in News?

More than a dozen annual reports from India's national commissions for [Scheduled Castes \(SCs\)](#), [Scheduled Tribes \(STs\)](#), and [Other Backward Classes \(OBCs\)](#) have not been made public for several years.

- Furthermore, several untabled reports in Parliament raising concerns about accountability and the timely implementation of welfare measures.

What is the Importance of Timely Submission and Tabling of Constitutional Commission Reports?

- **Mandated Responsibility:** Articles 338, 338A, and 338B of the Constitution require the NCSC, NCST, and NCBC, respectively, to submit annual reports to the President, reviewing the implementation of safeguards for marginalized communities.
 - These reports review safeguards and recommend measures for socio-economic development and protection of marginalized communities.
- **Policy Influence:** Recommendations shape government policies regarding reservations, creamy-layer criteria, community categorization, and welfare interventions.
 - Reports ensure relevant policymaking by highlighting emerging issues like discrimination, access to rights, and socio-economic indicators.
 - For instance, the NCST's Special Report on Good Governance for Tribal Development highlighted displacement and resettlement issues, helping to the enactment of the [Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition Act, 2013](#), which addressed tribal displacement concerns.
- **Accountability Mechanism:** Annual reports, along with action-taken reports, ensure government accountability to Parliament regarding the treatment and upliftment of SCs, STs, and OBCs.
- **Enabling Corrective Action:** Early identification of issues such as atrocities, or policy gaps allows for prompt corrective measures.
 - For instance, the NCST's Sixth Annual Report (2010-2011) highlighted enforcement loopholes of [Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes \(Prevention of Atrocities\) Act, 1989](#), leading to strengthened amendments in the [Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes \(Prevention of Atrocities\) Act, 2015](#).
- **Promotes Transparency and Trust:** Timely tabling of reports assures SC, ST, and OBC

communities that their concerns are heard, reflecting transparency, efficiency, and responsive governance.

- **Enhances India's Global Image:** It demonstrates India's commitment to inclusive development and human rights internationally, as reflected in its periodic reviews under the [United Nations Universal Periodic Review \(UPR\)](#) mechanism.

What Challenges Do Commissions Face in Timely Submission of Reports?

- **Resource Constraints:** Resource limitations pose a significant challenge for most commissions. The lack of adequate resources and experts for compiling and reviewing extensive reports delays the process.
 - Drafting detailed reports, particularly with recommendations for multiple states, is a time-consuming task that further exacerbates the issue.
- **Priority of Ministries:** The delay also stems from the priority given by nodal ministries to tabling the reports. In some cases, reports are delayed until the political and administrative focus shifts.
- **Outdated Methodologies and Technological Gaps:** Continued reliance on manual, **paper-based surveys slows data collection and fails to capture new economic realities like the gig economy.**
 - Limited integration of digital and administrative data sources reduces efficiency and comprehensiveness.
- **Lack of Clear Deadlines:** Article 338(5)(d) mandates annual reports on safeguards but leaves the timing for additional reports at the **Commission's discretion.**
 - This lack of a fixed deadline can lead to delays and inconsistencies, affecting timely accountability and review of safeguards.
 - Outdated reports from the commissions undermine their relevance, causing SCs, STs, and OBCs to lose faith in institutions meant to protect their interests.
 - Emerging issues such as new forms of discrimination, access to education, or economic exclusion may remain unaddressed in the absence of updated policy advice.
- **Inadequate Public and Parliamentary Pressure:** While reports from commissions are mandated to be submitted to the President and tabled in Parliament, **limited public and parliamentary pressure** allows delays in report submissions to persist without significant consequences.
 - The lack of rigorous monitoring contributes to unchecked delays.

Impact of Delayed Reports and Statistics on Governance

- **Undermining Evidence-Based Policymaking:** The delay in [Census](#) data undermines evidence-based policymaking.
 - Outdated data affects key welfare schemes like the [Public Distribution System \(PDS\)](#), which should cover 92 crore people by 2020 but is limited, leaving over 10 crore without benefits as the **National Food Security Act's (NFSA)** 67% coverage ratio, based on 2011 Census data, doesn't account for population growth.
 - Similarly, the [National Social Assistance Programme \(NSAP\)](#) relies on outdated [Socio-Economic Caste Census \(SECC\) data](#), limiting its expansion.
 - Additionally, **migration data**, critical for assessing trends and planning relief, remains outdated as 2011 data was only released in 2019, and the 2021 Census is delayed.
- **Urban and Rural Planning Difficulties:** Urban planning (infrastructure, housing, transport) and rural development (agriculture, water management) are undermined by data gaps.
 - Schemes like the [Jal Jeevan Mission](#) face challenges in accurate targeting **due to lack of updated rural household data.**
- **Erosion of Institutional Credibility:** The suppression of unfavorable data, such as the withholding of the **2017-18 National Sample Survey Office Consumption Expenditure Survey**, has raised concerns about transparency and the credibility of statistical institutions.

What are the Reforms Needed for Ensuring Timely Submission of Reports?

- **Deadlines with Accountability Mechanisms:** Enact rules mandating strict statutory timelines (e.g., within six months post-financial year) for report preparation and submission, similar to the audit practices outlined in the **Comptroller and Auditor-General of India (CAG) Auditing Standards 2017**.
- **Strengthening Institutional Autonomy:** Commissions like NCSC, NCST, and NCBC must be given functional autonomy similar to constitutional bodies like the [Election Commission](#).
 - Ensure financial independence, secure tenure for reporting officers, and protection from political interference. Institutionalize regular training in report writing, impact assessment, and data interpretation.
 - The Rangarajan Committee on Statistical Reforms (2001) recommended the establishment of an empowered National Statistical Commission (NSC) to oversee core statistical activities in India.
 - The NSC's role would be to evolve, monitor, and enforce statistical standards and ensure coordination among various statistical agencies.
- **Technological Reforms:** Use online dashboards to track report drafting, review, and submission phases across ministries.
 - Integrate blockchain for secure document authentication and timestamping. Deploy AI-driven analytics on platforms like [e-Shram](#) to automate report generation and minimize manual errors and delays.
- **Aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Monitoring:** Timely submission of reports must be integrated into **India's SDG 16 commitments** particularly indicators related to responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making.
 - India's Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) at the **United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)** must explicitly highlight improvements in domestic reporting structures.

Conclusion

The delay in releasing annual reports from the national commissions for SCs, STs, and OBCs reflects serious systemic issues. Timely report submission is crucial for ensuring that recommendations effectively influence policies for the socio-economic upliftment of these communities.

Drishti Mains Question:

Examine the role of constitutional commissions in shaping government policies. How do delays in their report submissions impact welfare schemes?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question:

Prelims

Q. Consider the following organizations/bodies in India: (2023)

1. The National Commission for Backward Classes
2. The National Human Rights Commission
3. The National Law Commission
4. The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission

How many of the above constitutional bodies?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Ans: (a)

Mains:

Q. What are the two major legal initiatives by the State since Independence addressing discrimination against Scheduled Tribes (STs). **(2017)**

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