

Bill No. XXIX of 2026

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR DE-NOTIFIED, NOMADIC AND
SEMI-NOMADIC TRIBES BILL, 2026

A

BILL

*to provide for the constitution of a National Commission for De-notified,
Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes to safeguard their rights, inquire
into violations, address historical injustice, ensure socio-economic
development and dignity, and for matters connected therewith
or incidental thereto.*

BE it enacted by Parliament in the Seventy-seventh Year of the Republic
of India as follows:—

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY

- 5 **1.** (1) This Act may be called the National Commission for De-notified,
Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes Act, 2026.
- (2) It shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may,
by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint.

Short title and
commencement.

Definitions.

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—
- (a) “Commission” means the National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes constituted under section 3;
- (b) “De-notified Tribes” means communities which were notified as criminal tribes under any law in force before the commencement of the Constitution and were subsequently de-notified by the Central Government from time to time;
- (c) “Nomadic Tribes” means communities traditionally pursuing a mobile or itinerant way of life for livelihood and notified as such by the Central Government in the Official Gazette from time to time;
- (d) “prescribed” means prescribed by rules made under this Act;
- (e) “Semi-Nomadic Tribes” means communities pursuing a partially mobile or seasonal way of life for livelihood and notified as such by the Central Government in the Official Gazette from time to time;
- (f) “State Government” means the Government of a State and includes the administration of a Union territory.

CHAPTER II

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR DE-NOTIFIED, NOMADIC AND SEMI-NOMADIC TRIBES

Constitution of National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes.

3. **(1) The Central Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, constitute a Commission to be known as the National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes to exercise the powers conferred on, and to perform the functions assigned to it, under this Act.**

(2) The Commission shall be a body corporate by the name aforesaid, having perpetual succession and a common seal, with power, subject to the provisions of this Act, to acquire, hold and dispose of property, both movable and immovable, and to contract, and shall, by the said name, sue or be sued.

(3) **The head office of the Commission shall be at such place in the country as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette specify and the Commission may, with the prior approval of the Central Government, establish offices at other places in the country as it may deem necessary, for the efficient discharge of the duties assigned to it under the Act.**

Composition of the Commission.

4. **(1) The Commission shall consist of a Chairperson, having specialised knowledge of, or practical experience in, matters relating to the socio-economic development, law, or administration concerning De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes, a Vice-Chairperson, three Members and a Member-Secretary:**

Provided that at least two Members shall belong to the De-notified, Nomadic or Semi-Nomadic Tribes:

Provided further that at least one Member shall be a woman.

(2) The Central Government may prescribe the following, namely: —

(a) qualification for appointment of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Members;

(b) salary, allowances payable to them and their term of office;

(c) disqualification for appointment and continuation as Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Members;

5 (d) resignation by Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Members and filling of vacancy;

(e) proceedings of the Commission;

(f) officers and employees of the Commission;

(g) powers to be exercised by the Chairperson; and

10 (h) any other matter to further the objective of this Act.

5. No act or proceeding of the Commission shall be questioned or shall be invalid on the ground merely by reason of:

Vacancies, etc., not to invalidate proceedings of the Commission.

(a) any vacancy in, or any defect in the constitution of the Commission; or

15 (b) any defect in the appointment of a person as Chairperson or Member of the Commission; or

(c) any irregularity in the procedure of the Commission not affecting the merits of the case.

CHAPTER III

20 FUNCTIONS AND POWERS OF THE COMMISSION

6. (1) The Commission shall perform all or any of the following functions, namely: —

Functions and powers of the Commission.

25 (a) evaluate the progress of the development of the De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes under the Union and any State;

(b) monitor the working of the safeguards available for the De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic in the Constitution or under any laws enacted by the Parliament and the State Legislatures;

30 (c) evaluate the progress of development programmes and schemes;

(d) make recommendations for the effective implementation of safeguards provided for the De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes and welfare schemes by the Central Government or the State Governments;

35 (e) inquire into specific complaints regarding deprivation of rights, discrimination, unlawful surveillance, police harassment or denial of welfare benefits and take up such matters with the appropriate authorities;

40 (f) participate and advise on the planning process for socio-economic development of the De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes;

(g) promote research, documentation and data collection relating to the De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes;

45 **(h) undertake awareness programmes to combat stigma and social exclusion; and**

(i) discharge such other functions as may be necessary or as may be prescribed to carry out the provisions of this Act or may be referred to it by the Central Government or any State Government.

	(2) The Central Government shall cause the recommendations referred to in clause (d) of sub-section (1) to be laid before each House of Parliament along with a memorandum explaining the action taken or proposed to be taken on the recommendations relating to the Union and the reasons for the non-acceptance, if any, of any of such recommendations.	5
	(3) Where any recommendation referred to in clause (d) of sub-section (1) or any part thereof with which any State Government is concerned, the Commission shall forward a copy of such recommendation or part to such State Government who shall cause it to be laid before the Legislature of the State along with a memorandum explaining the action taken or proposed to be taken on the recommendations relating to the State and the reasons for the non-acceptance, if any, of any of such recommendation or part.	10
Safeguards against discrimination and harassment.	7. The Commission shall recommend measures to the Central Government and State Governments, as the case may be, to protect De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes from discrimination, stigma, arbitrary detention, unlawful surveillance and abuse.	15
Welfare and development measures.	8. The Commission shall advise Central Government and State Governments on the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes relating to education, livelihood, housing, healthcare, social security, economic development and measures appropriate for mobile populations.	20
Review of classification and affirmative action.	9. (1) The Commission shall examine matters relating to inclusion, exclusion or misclassification of the De-notified, Nomadic or Semi-Nomadic Tribes under Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes or Other Backward Classes lists. (2) Upon such examination, the Commission may make recommendations to the Central Government and State Governments, as the case may be, for appropriate action.	25
Inquiry into complaints.	10. (1) The Commission may, either <i>suo motu</i> or on a complaint referred to it by the Central Government or any State Government, or received from any person or group of persons aggrieved, inquire into any matter concerning the De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes. (2) Every complaint under sub-section (1) shall be made in such form and manner, and shall be accompanied by such particulars, as may be prescribed: Provided that the Commission may entertain a complaint notwithstanding any defect in form if it is satisfied that sufficient grounds exist for inquiry.	30 35
Commission to have powers of a civil court.	11. (1) The Commission shall, while investigating any matter or inquiring into any complaint under this Act, have all the powers of a civil court trying a suit and, in particular in respect of the following matters, namely: — (a) summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining him on oath; (b) requiring the discovery and production of any document; (c) receiving evidence on affidavits; (d) requisitioning any public record or copy thereof from any court or office; (e) issuing commissions for the examination of witnesses and documents; and (f) any other matter which may be prescribed. (2) The Commission may make recommendations to the Central Government and State Governments, as the case may be, for remedial measures.	40 45 50

(3) The Commission may exercise such other powers as may be prescribed.

CHAPTER IV

COORDINATION WITH GOVERNMENTS AND STATUTORY BODIES

- 5 **12.** The Commission shall coordinate with Ministries and Departments of the Central Government and State Governments for effective implementation of its recommendations.
- 10 **13.** The Commission shall, to discharge its functions under this Act, act in coordination with the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes and the National Commission for Backward Classes.

Coordination with Central and State Governments.

Relationship with other Commissions.

CHAPTER V

FINANCE, ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT

- 15 **14.** **The Central Government, shall after due appropriation made by Parliament by law in this behalf, pay to the Commission, by way of grants such sums of money as the Central Government may think fit for being utilised for the purposes of this Act.**
- 20 **15.** (1) The Commission shall, in consultation with the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India, maintain proper accounts and other relevant records including the administration of the Fund and prepare an annual statement of accounts in such form and manner, at such time of each financial year, and such intervals, as may be prescribed.
- 25 (2) The accounts of the Commission shall be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India at such intervals as may be specified by him and any expenditure incurred in connection with such audit shall be payable by the Commission to the Comptroller and Auditor-General.
- 30 (3) The Comptroller and Auditor-General and any person appointed by him in connection with the audit of the accounts of the National Commission under this Act shall have the same rights and privileges and the authority in connection with such audit as the Comptroller and Auditor-General generally has in connection with the audit of Government accounts and, in particular, shall have the right to demand the production of books, accounts, connected vouchers and other documents and papers and to inspect any of the offices of the Commission.
- 35 (4) The accounts of the Commission, as certified by the Comptroller and Auditor-General or any other person appointed by him in this behalf, together with the audit report thereon shall be forwarded annually to the Central Government by the Commission and the Central Government shall cause the audit report to be laid, as soon as may be after it is received, before each House of Parliament.
- 40 (1) The Commission shall submit an annual report to the Central Government and to the State Government concerned and may at any time submit special reports on any matter which, in its opinion, is of such urgency or importance that it should not be deferred till submission of the annual report.
- 45 (2) The Central Government and the State Government concerned, as the case may be, shall cause the annual and special reports of the Commission to be laid before each House of Parliament or the State Legislature respectively, as the case may be, along with a memorandum of action taken or proposed to be taken on the recommendations of the Commission and the reasons for non-acceptance of the recommendations, if any, within a period of one year from the date of receipt of such report.
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Grants by Central Government.

Accounts and audit.

Annual and Special reports.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

The De-notified Tribes (DNTs), along with Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes, represent one of the most historically stigmatised and structurally marginalised sections of Indian society. The expression “De-notified Tribes” refers to communities that were notified as criminal tribes under colonial legislation, most notably the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871, and its subsequent amendments enacted by the British colonial administration. These laws were premised on the discriminatory assumption that criminality was an inherited trait of certain communities. As a result, entire groups were subjected to compulsory registration, restrictions on movement, forced settlement, police surveillance, collective punishment, and social ostracisation. Children were separated from families, livelihoods were destroyed, and generations were pushed into extreme poverty and exclusion. Although the Criminal Tribes Act was repealed in 1952 after Independence, these communities were merely “de-notified” without any meaningful programme for their social, economic, or legal rehabilitation.

Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes are closely interlinked with De-notified Tribes, as many de-notified communities traditionally pursued seasonal livelihoods. Nomadic Tribes are communities whose occupations require continuous mobility, while Semi-Nomadic Tribes move periodically and remain settled only for parts of the year. There is no uniform statutory or constitutional definition of these groups in India, and their classification varies widely across States. This definitional ambiguity has contributed to their continued invisibility in official records and policy frameworks.

According to estimates compiled from reports of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, India is home to approximately 425 De-notified Tribes, 810 Nomadic Tribes, and 27 Semi-Nomadic Tribes. The National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes, chaired by Shri Balkrishna Sidram Renke, estimated their combined population at around 10.74 crore on the basis of Census 2001 data. Despite this scale, the absence of reliable, disaggregated, and updated data has resulted in their systematic exclusion from evidence-based policymaking. The Renke Commission Report (2008) reported that DNTs and NTs were extremely vulnerable, with 89 per cent of the former and 98 per cent of the latter reporting that none of the families in their communities owned any land. The Renke Commission also prepared a comprehensive list of DNTs, NTs, and SNTs, identifying around 334 De-notified communities and approximately 809 Nomadic communities. The highest number of De-notified communities were found in States such as Tamil Nadu (68), Karnataka (67), and Telangana (36), while a larger number of Nomadic communities were identified in States such as Bihar (64), Tamil Nadu (60), and Maharashtra (38).

While the Constitution of India provides explicit recognition, safeguards, and institutional mechanisms for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and statutory recognition exists for Other Backward Classes, there is no comparable recognition of DNTs, NTs, or SNTs as a distinct category. Their inclusion within existing categories has been fragmented, inconsistent, and dependent on State-specific practices. Many communities are included under the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, or Other Backward Classes in some States but not in others, while a significant number remain entirely outside these categories. The National Commission chaired by Shri Bhiku Ramji Idate, which submitted its report in 2018 after extensive fieldwork and consultations across States, identified more than 1,235 De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic communities. Of these, at least 269 communities were found to be completely unclassified under the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, or Other Backward Classes lists, thereby excluding them from reservations, scholarships and other affirmative action measures.

Since Independence, several committees and commissions have examined the condition of these communities and highlighted the need for systemic intervention. The Ananthasayanam Ayyangar Committee in 1949 recommended

the repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act, leading to its formal withdrawal in 1952. The First Backward Classes Commission under Shri Kaka Kalelkar in 1953 acknowledged the extreme social and educational backwardness of de-notified and nomadic communities and cautioned against perpetuating the stigma associated with criminalisation. The Mandal Commission also took note of nomadic and semi-nomadic groups while assessing backwardness for the purposes of reservation. The Renke Commission, constituted in 2005 by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, was the first national-level body exclusively mandated to study De-notified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes. Its report, submitted in 2008, documented severe landlessness, lack of access to education and healthcare, absence of identity documents, near-total exclusion from institutional credit, and continued social discrimination. The reconstituted National Commission under Shri Bhiku Ramji Idate further reinforced these findings and made comprehensive recommendations, including the creation of a permanent statutory commission, focused welfare measures, improved data collection, and institutional safeguards.

Notwithstanding these repeated recommendations, the socio-economic conditions of De-notified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes remain alarming. Many members of these communities allege that they continue to face arbitrary detention and social profiling, often under residual State-level Habitual Offenders laws or informal policing practices. According to a report by the People's Archive of Rural India (PARI), literacy rates among these communities are significantly lower (45 per cent) than the national average (77 per cent), and school dropout rates remain high due to seasonal migration, lack of residential schooling facilities, and economic distress. Access to healthcare is limited, resulting in poor health indicators, while malnutrition and occupational hazards are widespread. Landlessness is pervasive, with a vast majority lacking formal land titles or secure housing. A substantial proportion of families lack caste certificates, domicile records, or other identity documents, preventing access to welfare schemes and constitutional entitlements. Social stigma continues to obstruct their integration into mainstream society, employment markets, and local self-government institutions.

The Government of India has, in recent years, initiated certain measures aimed at addressing the needs of these communities. However, in the absence of a statutory body with investigative powers, monitoring authority, and a mandate to report to Parliament, the implementation of welfare schemes has remained fragmented and accountability mechanisms have been weak. Unlike the National Commissions for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Backward Classes, there is no permanent national institution dedicated to safeguarding the rights and interests of De-notified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes.

The consistent demand articulated by these communities, as well as by expert bodies and parliamentary committees, has been for the establishment of a permanent statutory National Commission empowered to protect their rights, address grievances, monitor safeguards, and advise Governments on comprehensive socio-economic development. Such a commission is essential not only to remedy the historical injustice arising from colonial criminalisation but also to fulfil the constitutional mandate enshrined in Articles 14, 15, 16, 21, 38, and 46, which obligate the State to promote equality, social justice, and the interests of weaker sections of society. The proposed legislation seeks to institutionalise these obligations through the creation of a National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes, thereby providing a dedicated mechanism to ensure dignity, inclusion, and equal opportunity for some of the most marginalised citizens of India.

Hence, this Bill.

K. LAXMAN.

FINANCIAL MEMORANDUM

Clause 3 of the Bill provides for the establishment of National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes. Clause 4 provides for composition of the Commission, term of office, salaries, allowances of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Members, and for appointment of officers and staff of the Commission. Clause 6 provides for functions of the Commission, which *inter alia*, provides for undertaking awareness programmes to combat stigma and social exclusion. Clause 14 provides for Central Government to provide grants to the Commission for carrying out the purpose of this Bill.

The Bill, therefore, if enacted, would involve both non-recurring and recurring expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India. However, at this juncture, it is difficult to estimate the actual expenditure likely to be involved.

MEMORANDUM REGARDING DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Clause 20 of the Bill empowers the Central Government to make rules and the Commission to frame regulations for carrying out the purposes of the Bill. Clause 21 empowers the Central Government to issue orders for removing difficulties in giving effect to the provisions of the Act.

As the rules, regulations and orders will relate to matters of detail only, the delegation of legislative power is of a normal character.

RAJYA SABHA

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BILL

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into violations, address historical injustice, ensure socio-economic
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(Dr. K. Laxman, M.P.)