

# INTERNATIONAL THE NEWS

## Minorities dumped into janitorial jobs in govt department

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Discrimination against religious minorities continues unabated in government departments, reveals a recent postings list of the finance department. The list shows that all 21 positions for sweepers (BPS-01) have been allotted to Christians and Hindus, while not a single member of the minority groups was posted against other BPS-01 job openings, such as that of Chowkidar or Naib-Qasid, The News has learnt.

This policy of the government department of posting minorities at jobs that are viewed as the lowest of the low has disappointed Christians and Hindus, who had hoped to get positions other than janitorial ones after the announcement of a five percent job quota for minorities at all government institutions and departments.

It is pertinent to mention here that the posts for sweepers are the only ones which do not have further grades or ranks — that is, a person who is employed as a sweeper is stuck in the BPS-01 grade for life.

A 25-year-old sweeper from the same department burst into tears when he shared his story with The News. "My intermediate degree is good for nothing. When I came to know about the job quota, I was very happy and immediately applied for the position of a clerk, but I was devastated when I was given the post of a sweeper," he said on the condition of anonymity. "Previously, I was respectfully working for a courier company. I earned Rs9,000 per month. I had applied for the government post only for its benefits. Now, however, my confidence and the aims that I had in life have been shattered."

Meanwhile, Minority Affairs Minister Mohan Lal expressed extreme indifference about the matter when he told The News that members of religious minorities are employed to ensure that cleanliness work at the department keeps on running smoothly. "Only minorities are employed as sweepers because no Muslim is willing to work at this post. Even though our people dislike the job, they take it up so that they can feed their families at the end of the day," he said.

"I have been thoroughly humiliated by being employed as a sweeper," another sweeper from the department said. "I have two children, and because of my degrading job, I am embarrassed to get them enrolled at a school. I don't want their peers to taunt them about my job."

At the other end of the spectrum, no Sikh has been employed at any of the reserved quota jobs for minorities, thus highlighting the fact that people belonging to all religious backgrounds are not being accommodated. "No doubt we are less in number than the other minorities groups, but there are several people in our community who are unemployed. Sadly, the government chose to ignore us," Sikh Naujawan Sabha Chairperson Sardar Ramesh Singh said in frustration.

Meanwhile, Michael Javed, a former MPA, has slammed the government's policy and said that these double standard will not be tolerated. "We have always been neglected. Our people are abused; we live in the worse conditions and our people are being degraded by being forced to work in drains, clean filthy gutters, streets and offices. We simply have no one to go to," he lamented.