

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR MINORITY
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

CASE NO. 186 OF 2022

In the matter of:

St. Michael's Matriculation School, Big Bazaar Street, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

... Petitioner

Versus

The Principal Secretary, School Education Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, Rina Road, Fort St. George, Secretariat, Chennai, Tamil Nadu – 600 009.

... Respondent

Present: Mr. Jose Abraham, Advocate for the petitioner.
None for the respondent.

ORDER

Date: 25.09.2024

Dr. Shahid Akhter, Member, NCMEI

1. This petition has been received on 03.10.2022 by hand through Mr. Jose Abraham, Advocate of the petitioner institution for grant of Minority Status Certificate (in short 'MSC') to St. Michael's Matriculation School, Big Bazaar Street, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.
2. Learned counsel for the petitioner filed the affidavit of Most Rev. Dr. L. Thomas Aquinas, President of the petitioner society, in support of the averments made in the petition and also to prove that the beneficiaries of the petitioner institution are members of the Christian minority community.
3. Learned counsel for the petitioner has filed a copy of Unique ID No.: TN/2017/0160611 of the petitioner society as given by the Niti Aayog Portal NGO Darpan, copy of the application dated 21.03.2022 submitted before the State Competent authority for NOC alongwith postal receipt and its tracking report. He has also filed notarized copies of Certificate of Registration, Memorandum of Association, Rules and Regulations, amended Memorandum of Association alongwith founding members and governing body members list of The Coimbatore Diocese Society. He has filed original Governing Body Resolution of The Coimbatore Diocese Society, to obtain minority status certificate from this Commission, which is signed by all the members of the petitioner society. He has also filed notarized copy of recognition order dated 24.06.2024 issued by the Joint Director, Directorate of Private Schools, Chennai to the petitioner institution.
4. As per the information supplied by the unaided petitioner institution with regard to students' strength during the academic year 2019-20, it is mentioned that out of the total 678 students, 364 students were from the Muslim minority community, 54 students were from the Christian minority community and 260 students were Hindu. In the year 2020-21, it is

mentioned that out of the total 613 students, 330 students were from the Muslim minority community, 48 students were from the Christian minority community and 235 students were Hindu. In the year 2021-22, it is mentioned that out of the total 520 students, 265 students were from the Muslim minority community, 39 students were from the Christian minority community and 216 students were Hindu. It is relevant to mention here that during the academic year 2019-20, out of the total 25 teachers, 23 teachers were from the Christian minority community and 02 teachers were Hindu. In the year 2020-21, out of the total 19 teachers, 17 teachers were from the Christian minority community, 02 teachers were Hindu. In the year 2021-22, out of the total 14 teachers, 13 teachers were from the Christian minority community and 01 teacher was Hindu.

5. It is stated in the petition that on dated 21.03.2022, the petitioner institution has applied to the State Competent Authority for grant of NOC which was received by the State Competent Authority on 21.03.2022 and the same is still pending before the State Competent Authority. The State Competent Authority has not granted NOC in favour of the petitioner institution till now and also not rejected the said application and not communicated the same to the petitioner. After 90 days from the receipt of the application for grant of NOC, the petitioner has filed this application for grant of MSC to this Commission straightway as per the provisions of Section 10 and 11(f) of National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (in short 'NCMEI') Act, 2004.

6. After service of registered notice/email dated 14.11.2022, 28.04.2023, Director of Matriculation Schools, Chennai, on behalf of the respondent has sent reply dated 06.12.2022 by post which was received in the Commission on 12.12.2022. In the reply filed by the respondent i.e. Director of Matriculation Schools, Chennai, submitted that petitioner institution has filed application for grant of MSC. Minority Status is being granted by the State Government as per the guidelines stipulated in GO (MS) No. 375, School Education (X2) Department dated 12.10.1998 and GO (MS) No. 214 School Education (X2) Department dated 03.11.2008. It is stated that the management of the petitioner's school failed to produce the certificate issued by the Tahsildars concerned to ascertain that the educational institution satisfy additional guidelines including the guidelines prescribed in GO (MS) No. 375, School Education (X2) Department dated 12.10.1998 and GO (MS) No. 214 School Education (X2) Department dated 03.11.2008 and the claim of the petitioner is not maintainable either in law and the same is liable to be dismissed as devoid of merit. In these circumstances, it is prayed that the Commission may be pleased to take into account the objections of the respondent and suitable orders may be passed as per the Government orders.

7. Learned counsel for the petitioner filed subsequent pleadings and contended that the petitioner institution is a religious minority institution and run by The Coimbatore Diocese Society, which is a registered society, constituted by members of the Christian minority community primarily for the benefit of Christian minority community. On dated 21.03.2022, the petitioner institution had submitted an application for grant of NOC under Section 10 of the NCMEI Act, 2004 before the respondent. After the completion of 90 days from the date of receipt of the said application the petitioner institution applied for MSC before this Commission and this case is a fit case for intervention by this Commission. This Commission is functioning as per the NCMEI Act, 2004 read with the judicial pronouncements of the Apex Court for the purpose of declaration of MSC. Petitioner institution had applied for grant of NOC whereas the reply filed by the respondent does not even murmured a single word with regard to the receipt and further process of the said application for NOC, which is duly received by the respondent. In its reply, respondent has referred a couple of GOs like 375 dated 12.10.1998, 214 dated 03.11.2018 with the regard to the issuance of MSC by the State of

Tamil Nadu. None of Government orders are dealing with the issuance of NOC under Section 10 of the NCMEI Act, 2004, so instant case is a fit case for interference by this Commission. Hon'ble Supreme Court in Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny Vs. The State of West Bengal (Civil No. 3945 of 2018) decision dated 18.04.2018 in which Hon'ble Supreme Court has settled the law with regard to the applicability of Section 10 and 11 of the NCMEI Act, 2004 and in view of the said pronouncement of the Hon'ble Supreme Court the stand taken by the respondent will not survive in the eye of law and therefore, prayed that this Commission may issue MSC to the petitioner institution in the interest of justice and equity.

8. Heard learned counsel for the petitioner, perused the pleadings of the petition, the documents filed by the petitioner and affidavit of Most Rev. Dr. L. Thomas Aquinas, President of the petitioner society.

9. The petitioner institution has applied for grant of minority status certificate on the ground that the same has been established primarily for the benefit of the members of the Christian minority community and is being administered by The Coimbatore Diocese Society, which is managed and run by the members of the Christian minority community. The aforesaid averments made in the petition find ample corroboration from the documentary evidence produced on behalf of the petitioner institution and the affidavit of Most Rev. Dr. L. Thomas Aquinas, President of the petitioner society.

10. The respondent has not replied properly to the application submitted by the petitioner institution. Respondent has also failed to appreciate the provisions of NCMEI Act, 2004 especially under Section 10 of the Act and filed reply wrongly before this Commission. The petitioner has not applied for grant of MSC before the State Competent Authority. Petitioner has applied for grant of NOC under Section 10 of the NCMEI Act, 2004 before the State Competent Authority. So the guidelines of the Government of Tamil Nadu have not applied to the present petitioner institution. In the facts and circumstances of the present case the stand taken by the respondent is not tenable in the eye of law and deserved to be ignored.

11. The petitioner has fulfilled all the criteria for grant of MSC. The competent authority has failed to consider their application for grant of NOC. To obtain minority status certificate is a constitutional right of minority educational institution. The petitioner institution is established and administered by the members of the Muslim minority community. The reply filled by the respondent is clearly against the verdict of Hon'ble Apex Court in the matter of SISTERS of ST. JOSEPH OF CLUNY V/S THE STATE OF WEST BENGAL & ORS (Civil Appeal No. 3945/2018), judgement dated 18.04.2018, which reads as follows: -

“However, Section 10(1), which was introduced at the same time as Section 11(f) by the Amendment Act of 2006, Carves out one facet of the aforesaid power contained in Section 11(f), namely the grant of a no objection certificate to a minority educational institution at its inception. Thus, any person who desires to establish a minority educational institution after the Amendment Act of 2006 came into force, must apply only to the competent authority for the grant of a no objection certificate for the said purpose. It is a little difficult to subscribe to Shri Hedge's argument that the said powers are concurrent. Harmoniously read, all applications, for the establishment of a minority educational institution after the Amendment Act of 2006 must go only to the

competent authority set up under the statute. On the other hand, for the declaration of its status a minority educational institution at any state post establishment, the NCMEI would have the power to decide the question and declare such institution's minority status."

12. As per the Provisions of Section 10, Section 12A and Section 12B of the NCMEI Act, 2004, the person who desires to establish minority institution, is to apply to the State Competent Authority for grant of NOC for the said purpose under Section 10 of the NCMEI Act, 2004. The Act of 2004 also conferred powers of appeal against the orders of the Competent authority of the State to the NCMEI under Section 12A as well as over the authorities that were established by the Central Government or State Government which reject the application for grant of MSC to an educational institution under Section 12B of the NCMEI Act, 2004.

13. Looking to the provisions of the NCMEI Act, 2004 and verdict of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, this Commission has both jurisdiction original as well as appellate. Any educational institution who desires to establish minority educational institution has two options. Firstly, the institution can apply before an authority established by the Central Government or any State Government, Union Territory as the case may be for grant of MSC to any educational institution and if above authority rejects the application for grant of MSC, the aggrieved person may appeal against such order of the authority to this Commission under Section 12B of the NCMEI Act, 2004. Secondly, under Section 10 of NCMEI Act, 2004 whoever desires to establish an minority educational institution has to apply the competent authority of the State Government for grant of NOC within a period of 90 days from the receipt of the application, if competent authority does not grant NOC or application has been rejected but not communicated to the petitioner it shall be deemed that NOC has been granted and the petitioner can file an application for grant of MSC straightway to this Commission. Any person aggrieved by the order of refusal to grant NOC by the competent authority may prefer an appeal before this Commission under Section 12A of NCMEI Act, 2004.

14. In my opinion educational institution can opt one course, either to file an application for grant of MSC before the State Competent Authority or to file an application for grant of NOC. In the present case petitioner has applied for grant of NOC to the State Competent Authority and the said application is still pending as per the contention of the petitioner institution. The petitioner has not filed any application for grant of MSC before the State Competent Authority, so the GO's as mentioned in the reply of the respondent have no relevance in the present case.

15. Hon'ble Apex Court, various High Courts as well as this Commission in case of Buckley Primary School, Cuttack, Orissa Vs. Government of Orissa (order passed by this Commission in Case No. 1320 of 2009 dated 06.07.2010) have categorically held that the percentage of admission of students from notified minority community in a minority educational institution is not an indicia for determining the minority status of such institution. This Commission has also decided that there must be reasonable strength of students of particular minority community in a minority educational institution. The percentage could be determined based on the actual proportion of specific minority community in the State population as per prevailing census. Population of Christian minority community in the State of Tamil Nadu as per the census of 2011 is 6.12%.

16. I have perused the amended Memorandum of Association of The Coimbatore Diocese Society, which was registered before the Registrar of

Societies, Coimbatore on dated 03.01.2018 which is before the filing of NOC application U/s 10 of the NCMEI Act, 2004 dated 21.03.2022 and petition for grant of MSC on dated 03.10.2022.

17. The amended Memorandum of Association of The Coimbatore Diocese Society and all the documents produced by the petitioner institution clearly reflect that the beneficiaries of the petitioner institution are primarily the members of the Christian minority community. In addition, the said fact also stands proved from the documents and affidavit filed by the petitioner. There is no document on record to rebut the documentary evidence produced on behalf of the petitioner institution before this Commission.

18. Relying on the said un rebutted evidence produced on behalf of the petitioner, we find and hold that the St. Michael's Matriculation School, Big Bazaar Street, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, is eligible for grant of minority status on religious basis. The evidence also proves that the said educational institution was established with the main objective of sub-serving the interests of the Christian minority community.

19. Consequently, St. Michael's Matriculation School, Big Bazaar Street, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, is declared as unaided minority educational institution covered under Article 30 of the Constitution of India within the meaning of Section 2(g) of the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions Act, 2004 subject to the condition that the petitioner would file an affidavit or undertaking to the fact that the petitioner institution shall not deny admission of eligible candidate of the Christian minority community subject to the eligibility of the students and availability of the accommodation in the petitioner institution. If the petitioner institution failed to comply the above order of this Commission within a period of three months from the date of order passed by this Commission then the petition filed by the petitioner for grant of MSC will be automatically deemed to be dismissed.

20. After compliance of the above order, a minority status certificate be issued accordingly.

21. In view of the above, the present petition is disposed of in accordance with this order.

Signed, pronounced and published on **Wednesday, 25th day of September, 2024.**

**DR. SHAHID AKHTER
MEMBER**