

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2023 · 10 marks

National Commission for Minorities

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1 no single constitutional definition → notified minority groups need protection → NCM gives this institutional form
- R2 1978 Minorities Commission → 1992 Act → statutory status to safeguard minorities

Body flow

seven-member composition → monitors Articles 25–30 safeguards → evaluates minority development → investigates complaints (Bharatpur, Assam) → civil court powers

Counter-view

statutory, not constitutional → recommendations non-binding → vacancies + delayed reports → **Tahir Mahmood** (toothless tiger / Sarkari puppet) → **Zoya Hasan** (needs constitutional backing + political will)

Conclusion routes

- R1 institutionally real but underpowered → needs constitutional status + binding powers
- R2 move from optics to genuine mandate → enforceable powers would let it deliver

India does not carry a single constitutional definition of minority, yet it has long recognised the need to protect notified groups, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, Buddhists and Jain from inequality.

The National Commission for Minorities gives this commitment institutional form. It grew from the 1978 Minorities Commission and received statutory status under the National Commission for Minorities act 1992.

A 7-member body of a chairperson, Vice-chairperson & 5 members, it monitors constitutional safeguards under Articles 25 to 30, evaluates minority development and investigates complaints, as it did the Bhanatpur riots and the Bodo-Muslim clashes in Assam. It also holds civil court powers to summon witnesses and records.

Yet its reach stays limited. Being statutory, not constitutional, its recommendations bind no one, while vacancies and delayed reports weaken it further.

Tahir Mahmood called it a toothless tiger and a Sarkari puppet. For Zoya Hasan, minority rights cannot be realised without constitutional backing and political will. Constitutional status and binding powers, not optics, would let it deliver.