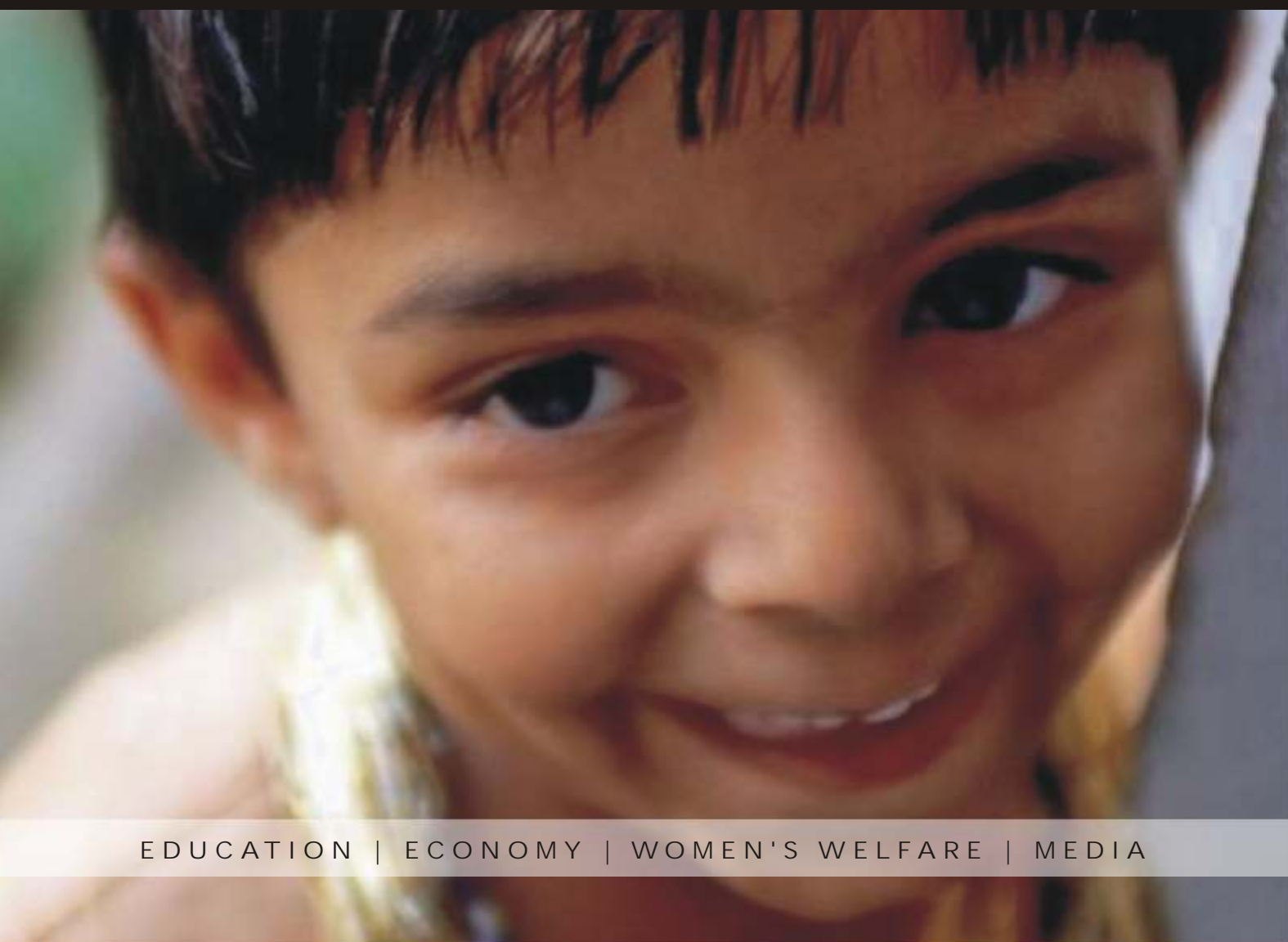


# HDI

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Working together  
for the development of  
the Muslim community in India



EDUCATION | ECONOMY | WOMEN'S WELFARE | MEDIA

# Looking back, looking ahead



India is home to some 1.1 billion people of different faiths, cultures, languages and economic conditions. Muslims, accounting for 148 million, form about 14 percent of the country's population which has a long history of their presence. For centuries, Muslims led it to great civilisational achievements, compared favourably to the Abbasids, Umayyads, Andlusians, Safavids and Ottomans. Over the centuries Indian (till 1947, including Pakistan and Bangladesh) Muslims were at the forefront of intellectual, economic, cultural and social development.

For some historical reasons, which are yet to be studied in-depth, an enduring pattern of decline set in, in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The entry of British forces into the Mughal capital of Delhi in 1803 marked a watershed. By 1857, when the British finally took Delhi under their full control, replacing the last Mughal "emperor" and banishing him to

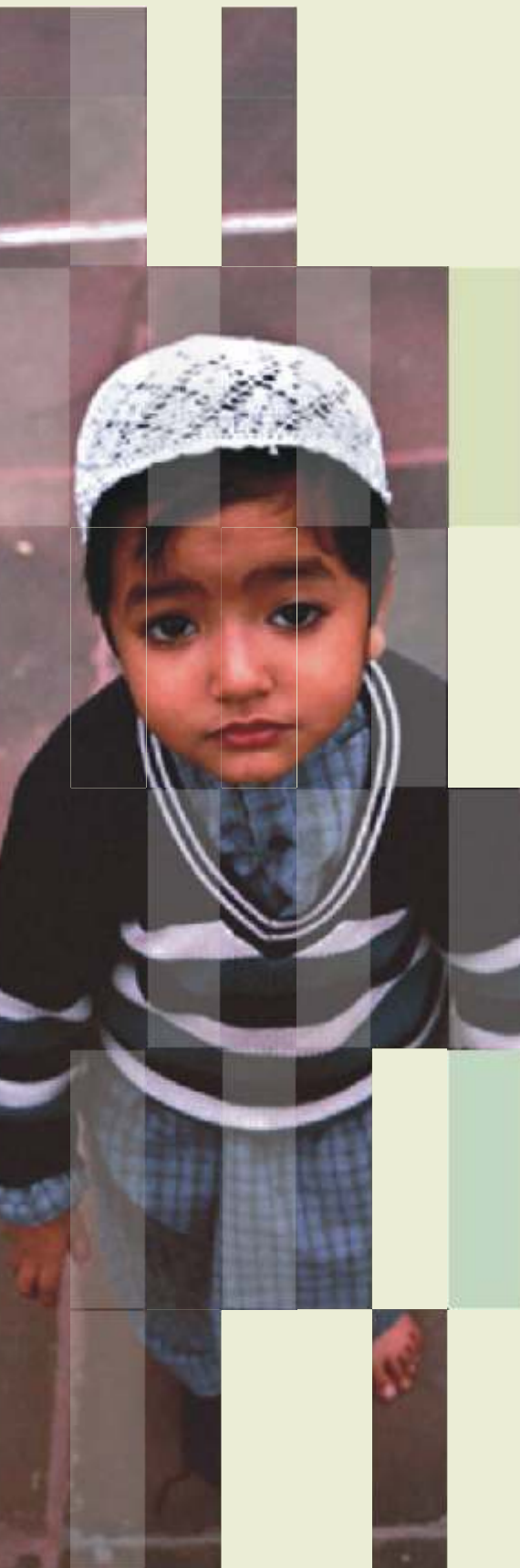
Burma, the political decline had come full circle.

The impoverishment deepened with the independence of India and its partition to create the Muslim state of Pakistan with western and eastern wings. This divided the Indian Muslim community into three parts and led to further disempowerment, isolation and alienation of Indian Muslims. Large-scale anti-Muslim riots, which began with the preparations for transfer of power from the British to Indian hands, aggravated the economic









conditions of Muslims and created a great sense of insecurity.

Within the next quarter century Indian democracy flourished in its own imperfect way, creating checks and balances a free press, an independent judiciary, and several other important constitutional institutions. By then a small Indian Muslim middle class, too, had begun to form.

The next few years saw the rise of some high-profile Muslims like the Chief of Indian Air Force, the Chief Justice of India, the Vice-President, and the President of India. High-profile Muslims were already there in films, music, sports, art, literature and drama. Somehow, all this effectively camouflaged the miserable situation of Indian Muslims. In reality, the new makers of India's destiny were only

interested in empowering some individuals from among India's Muslims but were averse to empowering the community itself with affirmative measures such as reservations which are available to other underprivileged sections. The fact remained that the highly visible Muslims only masked an ugly reality beneath the surface.

Over the years Muslim worries had not lessened, but increased in many ways. Anti-Muslim riots continued unabated as law-keepers looked the other way, if they did not actually participate in the attacks.

By 1985, as many as 22,000 anti-Muslim riots were staged, killing 67,000 people. The 1990-2000 period was marked by a great advance in India's economic







development, but this period also turned out to be one of the worst for Muslims.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its Human Development Report 2000 noted that out of all anti-minorities riots between 1954 and 2000, as many as 34 percent came between 1990-2000. The 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat state made headlines worldwide.

Poverty, lack of education, insecurity - these have been some of the dominant themes of Muslim life in India. The resultant backwardness is monumental.

The five and a half years of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at Centre marked a relentless drive to defame Islam, demonise Muslims and brand mosques and madrasahs as terrorist dens. International

agencies and national organisations refuted the propaganda although Muslims had no media of their own to counter it.



# Past Initiatives

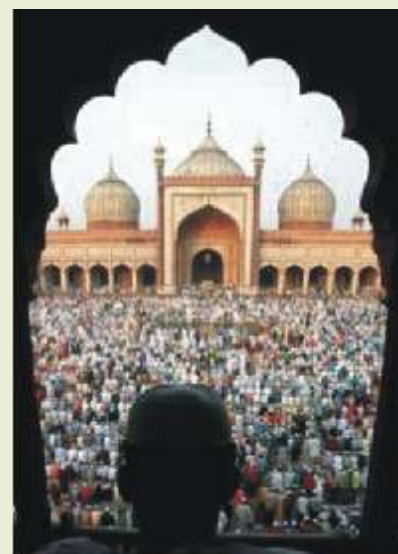
In the past, initiatives have been taken in regard to economic regeneration and spread of education. Muslim schools, colleges, engineering and medical colleges, and even private universities have come up. However, for a population of 148 million this has not even begun to address a fraction of the need.

There were financial initiatives, too. Some succeeded, some did not. Some non-banking financial institutions promoted as “models” for interest-free transactions, flopped for various

reasons. Others, too, failed one after another.

It is quite obvious that no people can rise and empower themselves without the benefit of education. We have to work on our economic betterment, development of educational institutions and creation of our own media. We have to work for years to come before we start getting results.

Demands from government alone will not do, and every individual will have to take on responsibilities towards the above end.

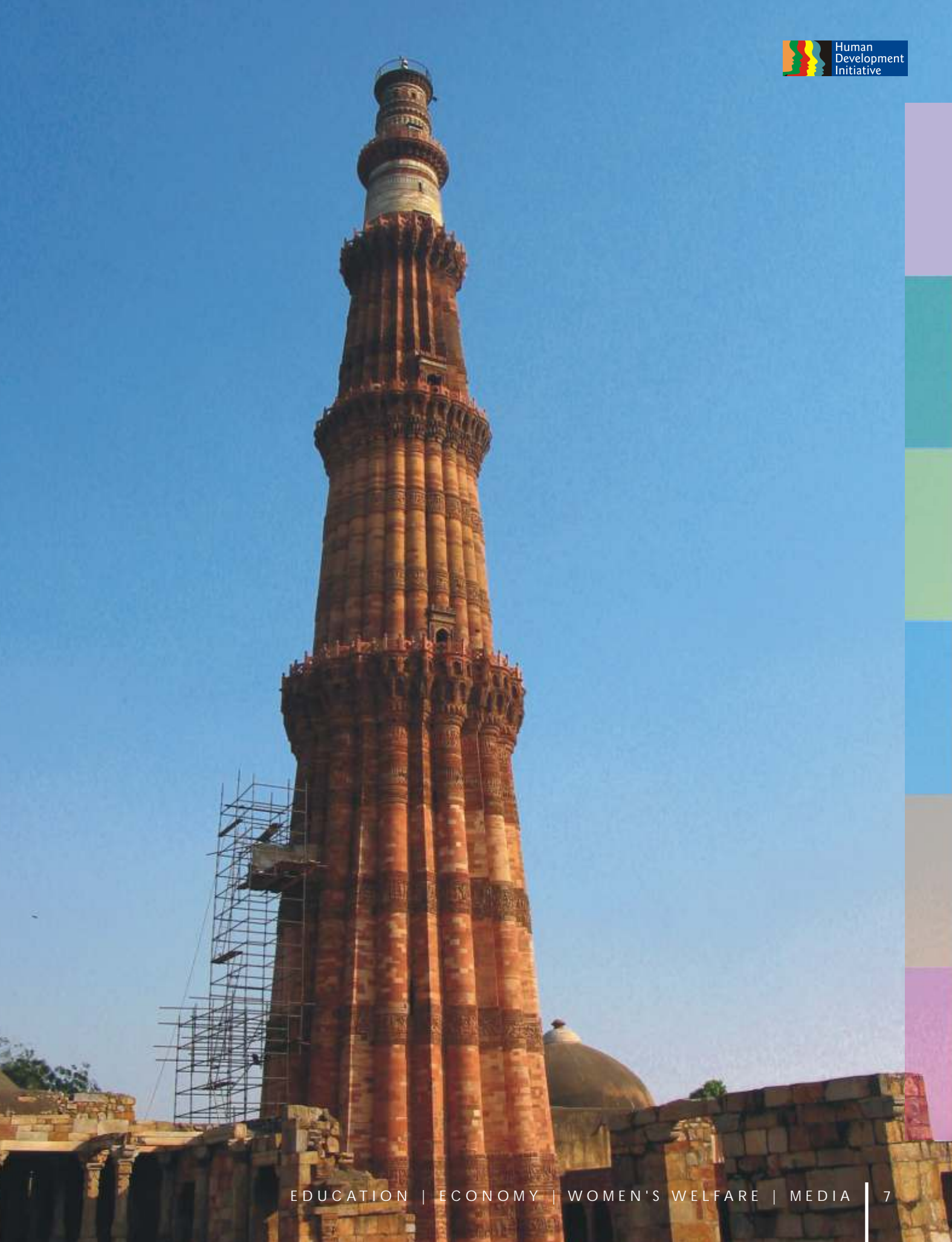


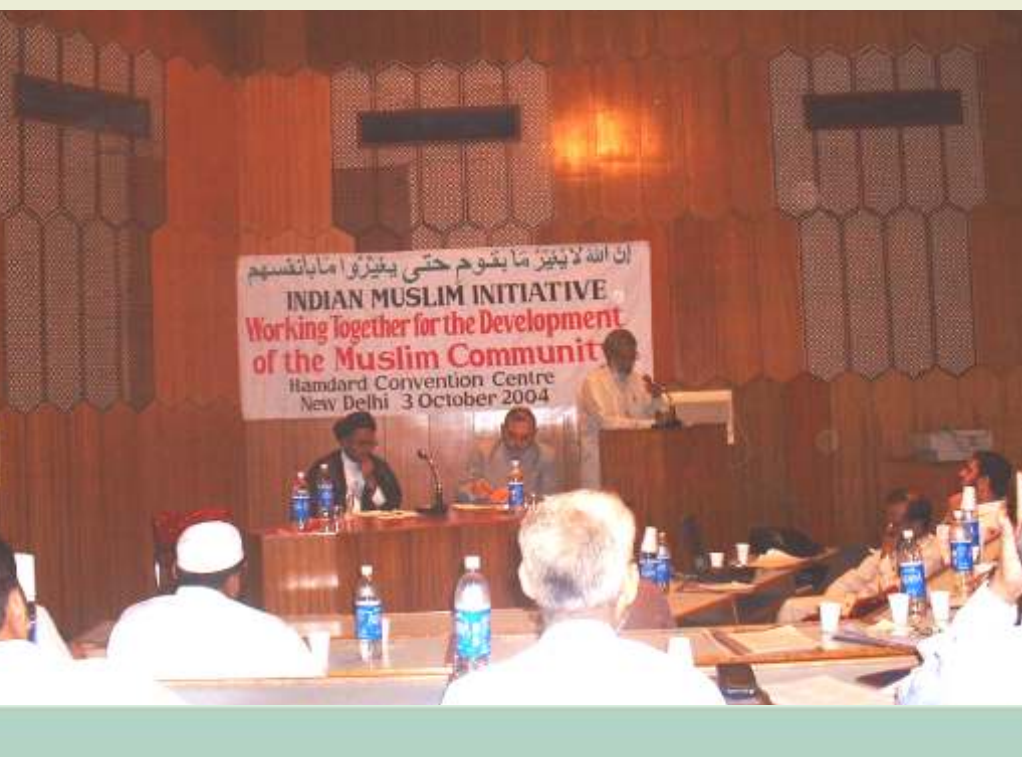
For years socially conscious Muslims within India have engaged with these pressing issues, largely on the level of serious thinking and small initiatives.



We have several million Indian Muslims working in foreign countries. Three and a half million Indians work in the Gulf, including Saudi Arabia, most of them being Muslim. These issues have constantly worried them too. Although they visit India only once a year or every two years, they too have contributed in their own way in their localities and families to mitigate the hardships.







other community as a competitor or enemy. They only seek to enrich themselves with education, work hard for economic uplift and improve the condition of Muslim women. All of this would make them more useful citizens of a thriving country.

The HDI would depend on volunteer work, keep itself away from ethnic, linguistic, regional and sectarian squabbles, and work for the welfare and uplift of other disadvantaged sections of the Indian society, too.

## New Initiative

In June 2004, a small group of these people sat together for three long days to forge a plan of uplift of Indian Muslims. People from all over India participated in these meetings.

Four thrust areas for action were marked: Education, Economy, Media, Women's uplift. This movement is called Human Development Initiative (HDI). It was clear from the outset that the HDI would not work from an adversarial perspective, i.e., Indian Muslims don't see any





# Food for Thought

How a community perceives its standing vis-à-vis others may not be based entirely on unimpeachable data, but by and large such perceptions are rooted in daily experience of living as well as on a set of fairly reliable facts.

A sample survey conducted in 2004 came up with startling findings about Muslim perceptions. The survey was conducted in nine states of the country Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala in the South; Maharashtra in the West; Bihar, West Bengal in the East; Rajasthan, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh in the North.

The survey conducted over four weeks at the behest of the HDI tried to have some idea of Muslim perception about their educational, economic and social status in the country. It also looked at their perceptions regarding security and their position in the larger society. Fifteen hundred respondents were asked to fill up a comprehensive questionnaire. The respondents came from different social and economic strata that included labourers, students, lawyers, doctors, businessmen, senior

government officials, ulama and political leaders.

To begin with, such surveys produce data which are not very easy for common educated people to collate, interpret and finally make sense of, but a simplified version that comes below should make it clear that Indian Muslims are in trouble, and they know they are in trouble. Some of the findings:

## Education

Forty eight percent Indian Muslims believed that they had not improved educationally, "except a little bit". Thirteen percent felt they had not improved at all. Three percent



thought educationally, their condition had in fact deteriorated. Among the rest 36 percent opinion varied between "education has improved notably" to "highly improved." That is, as many as 67 percent had a negative perception about a crucial element in their lives.





significant from any measure. Only 23 percent said their social acceptance had improved a little, while nine percent felt it had improved notably.

## Economy

As many as twenty four percent thought their economic condition had not improved, while 16 percent were certain that it had aggravated. That accounted for 40 percent people with a clearly negative perception of their economic condition. This, as we see from data collected by NSS and others, was quite close to the ground reality. Fifteen percent felt that their condition had improved notably. Forty three percent thought their economic condition had improved a little bit, while a microscopic minority of two percent felt it had "improved highly".

## Social Respect

The findings under this head were bothersome, to say the least. Thirty nine percent respondents said their "social respect" had decreased, while 27 percent said it had not improved at all. The negative perception cut a swath of a whopping 66 percent, which is

## Security

Concerns about security have always marked Muslim lives in India since independence. Anti-Muslim riots and state-sponsored pogroms being a fact of life, such concern is only natural. Living in the shadow of the fearsome anti-Muslim pogrom of 2002, as many as 33 percent Indian Muslims felt that their security had not improved even a bit. Twenty eight percent thought it had aggravated instead. And that showed 58 percent people had a decidedly negative perception about their security. On the other hand, 23 percent said that security had improved a little bit, and 15 percent were of the opinion that it had improved notably.







Quite naturally, there were wide variations in perception between northern, southern, eastern and western states as they also reflected the different conditions of Muslims in different geographical locations. Quite as understandable were the variations in perceptions among different age groups. The respondents' economic status, professional and social standing, too, brought them experiences in life different from those of people in other socio-economic strata.

However, what was marked throughout was preponderantly negative perception of a large section

of people on all the above counts. Such perceptions as stated above are supported by unimpeachable data from respectable institutions like National Survey Scheme

(NSS) and National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER). In short, the survey provided food for thought. It also showed it was time for collective action.

## Areas of Work

Certain policies would form the backbone of our work. One would be complete transparency. Another would be to ensure that every function of HDI is kept strictly within legal parameters. In short: accountability, transparency and legality would be guiding principles.

### Education

This calls for massive effort to start schools in severely deprived areas, picking up gifted children and putting them in better schools and funding their overall education and development, setting up hostels, libraries, book-banks, scholarship trusts,



coaching classes and tutorials for competitive exams and improving Muslim participation in institutes like the IIM, IITs, RECs, IISC and other such institutions. Effort will also be made to provide them culture and value-related coaching. For improving Muslim education we are to select some severely deprived localities and support poor students by partly funding their education. We would also try to persuade schools to get the remaining part of such students' fees waived.

## Poverty Alleviation

The HDI also intends to work among Muslims living below the poverty line. It would try to break the vicious circle of deprivation, which leads to increase in their poverty with every new generation. The HDI would take measures like

skill development, entrepreneurial training, micro-financing and participatory effort to mitigate poverty.

## Livelihood

Artisans and unskilled labour are among our distressed classes. To pull them out of their depressed economic condition the HDI would form co-operative societies, and also try to avail of the existing provisions in government policy and schemes to help such people. To enhance their marketability it would try to improve their



professional skills through encouraging training and improving market access for their products and services.

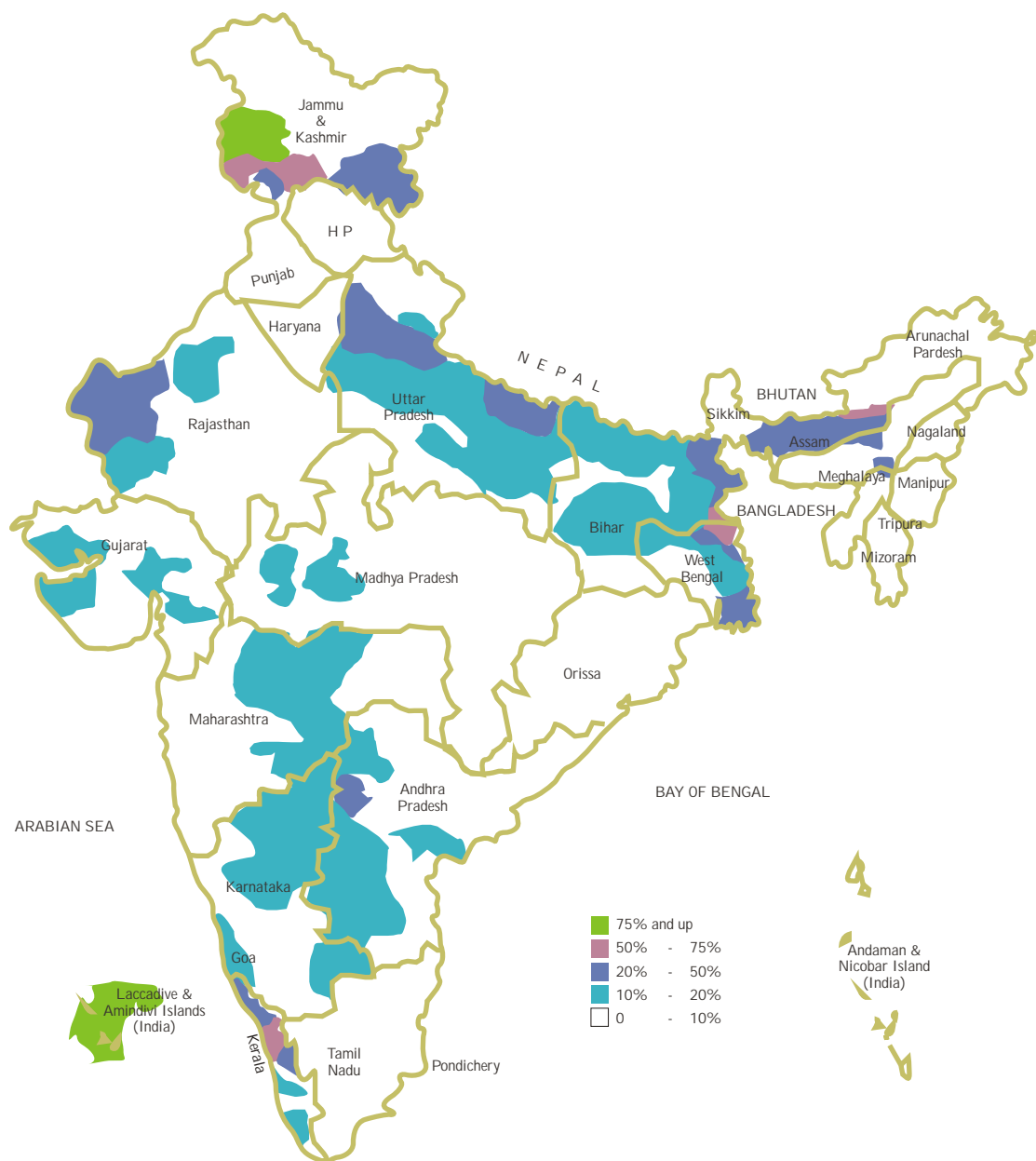
## Women's Welfare

Women's well-being is an important indicator of any society's health. Muslim



# India

## Muslim distribution



Based on Muslim & Arab Perspectives, Oct-Dec 1994 (Map not to scale)



women's welfare is a major concern for HDI. Many Muslim women are not aware of the protection to

that the Sharia offers them. Areas of work like women's education, health and livelihood are of

pivotal significance to us. The ultimate objective of our programme would be to liberate women from childhood marriage or prolonged spinsterhood, triple talaq, domestic violence and disinheritance.



## Legal Protection

Formation of legal cells to protect the community from anti-Muslim organisations and pursue cases of riots and persecution. Dialogue with other communities' leaders, promotion of fraternal relationship



with other communities, public relations etc, is also among our goals.

## Integrating Human Resource

To get the advantage of synergy we have to bridge the gap between madrasah-educated and university-educated people through different programmes, one of them being facilitation of the entry of madrasah graduates into portals of contemporary education.

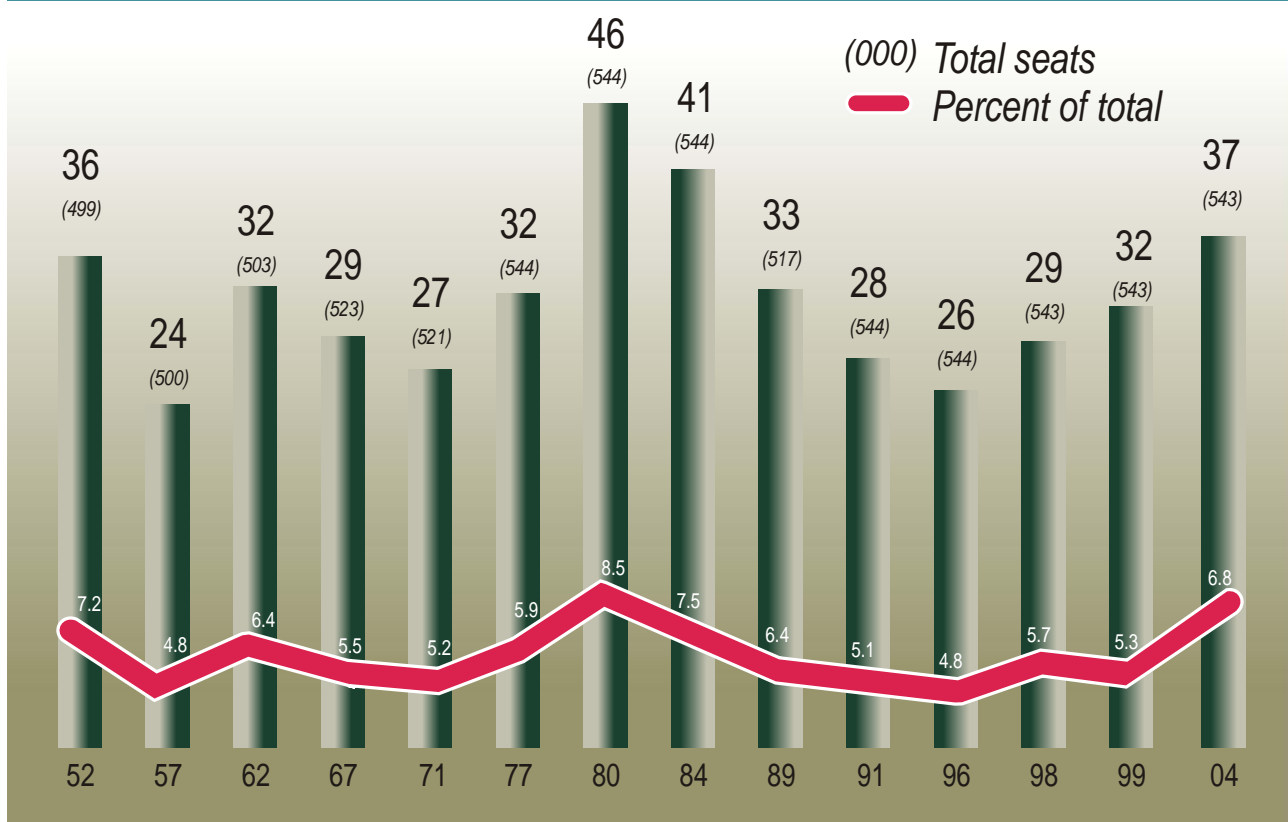
## Media Development

Inadequate access to media (and, most of the time lack of access to media) harms our cause. We do have some media assets of our own in the form of publications in Urdu, Malayalam and Gujarati etc, but even these are of a primitive nature, hamstrung by lack of funds, training and technology. A state of the art media stable (newspapers, magazines, radio, TV channels) is still



out of our reach. In the past we did try to build a cadre of journalists through private initiative, but even they drifted away to the commercial media as we could not provide employment to them. The HDI would work towards reversing the present situation in a sustained way.

## Muslims elected to the Lok Sabha down the years



## Initiative Launching Document

### Vision

An enlightened, prosperous, creative, respectable and empowered community promoting peace and justice through Divine guidance to serve India and humanity

### Scope

Women, Education, Economy, Media

### Principles

- Sacrificing some of our own programmes for the sake of the shared vision
- Commit to work together despite small differences
- Openness to accept others' views for the sake of our vision
- Commitment to basic Islamic and ethical values

### High Importance, High Influence Stakeholders

Parents, Community, Teachers, Institutions for Women, Religious Leaders, Consumers, Investors, Media Owners, Audience, Students

### Executive Council (Alphabetically)

- (Maulana) Aatur Rahman Qasmi, Delhi
- Abdussalam Puthige, Mangalore
- E Aboobacker Hassan, Calicut
- Hafiz Rashid Choudhury, Guwahati (Vice President)
- Maqbool Ahmad Siraj, Bangalore (Secretary, Media)
- Mushtaq Ahmad Alig, Delhi (Secretary, Finance)
- (Dr) Rahamatullah Abdul Ahad, Mumbai (Secretary, Economy)
- (Dr) Safia Amir, Delhi (Secretary, Education)
- (Maulana) Salman Husaini Nadwi, Lucknow (President)
- Uzma Naheed, Mumbai (Secretary, Women welfare)
- (Dr) Zafarul-Islam Khan, Delhi (General Secretary)



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