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OCTOBER BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

The month of October is observed as breast cancer awareness month worldwide. During this month different activities are conducted worldwide to educate and create awareness about the cancer affecting a large population of women all across the world including India. In India, Breast Cancer accounts for 25-31% of all cancers in women. All campaign tries to make people aware of the need for early detection of breast cancer, its treatment options available and prevention methods that can help save lives. Breast cancer is by far the most prevalent and common cancer in women. And according to studies, early detection of breast cancer can increase the survival rates of the patient.

In this article, we have tried to bring some of the important information that all women should know about early detection of breast cancer and how it may be done to identify the signs.

Breast cancer is characterized by uncontrolled growth of cells, which results in formation of lumps within the breast. It is one of the treatable forms of cancers. However, if it's not detected early, then it can become a life-threatening disease as it can also spread to other parts of the body. The cancer can occur at any age, but it is most common in women above the age of 40 years. According to research, the average age of developing breast cancer has also undergone a significant shift from 50-70 years to 30-50 years.

Women should be aware as to how their breast normally look and feel. As the new research pattern claims the average age of woman from 30 years are likely to develop breast cancer, and one should make it as part of routine to get mammography done. Mammography is a simple radiographic technique which helps in detecting irregularities in the breast tissue.

1. BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH.

Now let's highlight on some of the risk factors related to breast cancer, in order to take precautions, alerts for early detection and successful treatment.

1. If a woman has a family history whose mother or sister had breast cancer, it is advisable to carry routine screening often, in order to lower the risk of developing the disease or even preventing it.
2. If a woman who may have had some type of non-cancerous breast lumps in the past, it is more likely for her to develop cancer later on. So, it is advisable to take timely precautionary treatments and exercise regularly.
3. With or without any symptoms, one should meet with qualified doctor for screening test/check with signs of having any dense breast tissue. If one finds dense breast tissue then it carries a higher chance of developing breast cancer sooner or later. Such case can occur to any woman in early 20s as well.

4. Women who started having periods earlier or entered menopause later than usual, are said may have some risk of developing breast cancer. This is because their bodies have been exposed to oestrogen for longer duration.
5. According to medical experts, diet and lifestyle choices also makes a difference. It is advised to avoid smoking, consuming excessive alcohol and avoid high fat diet consumption. It is observed that obesity may also cause breast cancer. Plenty of nutritious vegetables and fruits in diet will helps in maintaining a healthy body weight.
6. For new mothers, it is advisable to breastfeed their child at least for one year. It is said that, if a mother and child have skin to skin contact, it benefits the mother by reducing risk of breast and ovarian cancer.
7. Since age is also one of the factors, it becomes more important that every woman educate selves with this information and take up routine exercises for keeping tap of one's good health.

Disclaimer: Partials of this content is taken from National Health Portal (www.nap.gov.in) and the rest is the view of the writer/editor. Please refer NHP's website for more detailed information and related programmes.



Q1. If I have breast cancer, am I higher risk of getting COVID19?

No information is certain as of now, and SARS-CoV-2 is a new virus, anyone who is exposed to it is at risk of becoming infected and developing COVID-19. Some cancer treatments can weaken your immune system (cause you to be immuno compromised) or other medications that can weaken the immune system that may increase your risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Getting a flu vaccine this year is more important than ever because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It is especially important for people with cancer, as they may be at a higher risk for more severe forms of the flu and COVID-19.

Q2. I'm a breast cancer survivor, am I at risk of severe illness from COVID19?

People who were treated for cancer in the past may have weakened immune systems but, at this time, it is not known whether having a history of cancer increases their risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Cancer survivors may want to discuss their concerns about COVID-19 with their doctors. There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID19 or specific treatment for it. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus by following the golden rules of social distancing, wearing mask, washing and sanitizing hands and disinfectant areas regularly. Only step out of the house when necessary and avoid visitors at home.

Q3. Does any lumps in breast means breast cancer?

Only a small percentage of lumps in the breast are cancerous. But if there is a persistent lump in the breast or any change in the breast tissue, always consult a doctor for a clinical breast exam.

Q4. Is breast cancer always genetic?

Only around 10% of individuals having breast cancer have a family history of this disease. Most women who are diagnosed with cancer have no family history.

Q5. Is breast cancer contagious?

Breast cancer neither can be caught from someone nor can be transferred to someone. It is a non-communicable disease which results from uncontrolled cell growth of the breast tissue.

Q6. Can a mammogram cause spread of breast cancer?

A mammogram or X-ray of breast helps in early detection of breast cancer. It requires a very small dose of radiation. The risk of harm from this radiation is extremely low.

Disclaimer: These advices provide generic information only. It is in no way a substitute for qualified medical opinion. Always consult a Specialist/Doctor for information. The Commission claims no rights over this content, and advice to read other relevant information from qualified/right sources.

"Early Detection is the Key to Prevention"

10 WAYS WE CAN REDUCE THE STIGMA ATTACHED TO MENTAL HEALTH

1. Educate yourself about mental health.
2. Be a positive mental health role model.
3. Be aware of how to talk to people. Words can have a big impact.
4. Don't be afraid to talk about mental health. Be brave.
5. Get the facts right.
6. Show care, love and compassion for people experiencing mental health problems.
7. Don't be rude or use negative terms when talking about people and mental health.
8. Embrace therapy. Don't be ashamed to seek support or help.
9. See the person, not the illness. Don't label or stereotype.
10. Treat people equally.

2. WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY.

10th October is observed as international day of 'World Mental Health Day' for global mental health education, awareness and advocacy against social stigma to discuss mental disorders, and to mobilize collective efforts in support of mental healthcare and programmes. Mental health includes a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It has become increasingly important to take actions in recent decades, as an estimated 350 million people worldwide is reported suffer from depression (source: www.who.int) For this financial year 2020-2021, one of the main focuses of the Commission is to initiate activities and programmes that provide mental healthcare and counselling support for women facing mental stress and disorders. The Commission continues to build association with esteemed research institutes and have launched many pioneering projects in the past. Currently, the Commission is in talks with Chandigarh based Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) on Mental Healthcare & Counselling for Women, and the project will be launch soon.

3. INTERNATIONAL GIRL CHILD DAY.

11th October is International Day of the 'Girl Child', declared by the United Nations, to support opportunity for girls and increase awareness of gender inequality faced by girls worldwide based upon their gender. The inequalities were identified as access to education, nutrition, legal rights, medical care, and protection from discrimination, violence against women and forced child marriage. The awareness day also reflects the successful emergence of girls and young women as a distinct cohort in development policy, programming, campaigning and research. The Campaign Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) is one of the such initiatives of Government of India that raise awareness not only of the issues that girls face, but also of what is likely to happen when those problems are solved. For example, educating girls helps reduce the rate of child marriage, disease and helps strengthen the economy by helping girls have access to higher paying jobs. BBBP was launched on 22nd January 2015, two days before the day of India's National Girl Child Day (24th January). To know more about BBBP achievements and current updates, check on www.wcd.nic.in/bbbp-schemes

4. UPDATES FROM COMPLAINT & INVESTIGATION CELL.

OCTOBER 2020:

Mode of Complaint	Complaints Received	Complaints Closed (Old+New)
Offline+Online+WhatsApp	2373	705

5. SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTIONS OF C&I CELL.

(1). The Commission received a complaint from a woman alleging sexual harassment at workplace accompanied by impartial treatment and workplace harassment. She claimed that, since the respondent is an influential person, no action was initiated on her complaint by the organization. She also claimed that she was not assigned any work despite being posted as Labour Enforcement Officer. The Commission took up the matter with the Labour Commissioner at Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh), and organized hearings with officers from concerned department at the woman's office. The matter was resolved, and the Commission was informed that the woman has been assigned to her work, and the respondent was transferred to another office.

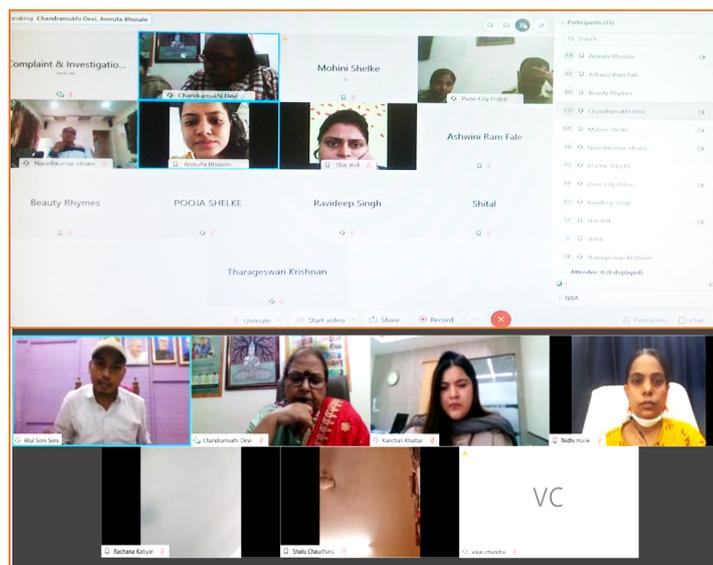
(2). The Commission received a complaint from a woman from Manipur, who alleged that her cousin sister along with her minor daughter has left for Delhi from Manipur without informing the family members. They were not aware that the sister was having a living in relationship with a man from Haryana, who had actually taken the sister to Delhi earlier, on the pretext of finding her work in the city. The Commission immediately investigated the matter with concern authorities and within days the sister with the minor daughter was found and rescued. They were sent back to Manipur safely from Delhi.

(3). The Commission received a complaint from a girl from Patna (Bihar), and alleged that she was not allowed to work or apply for jobs and move out to metro cities for career opportunities. She was facing restrictions from her own parents. She approached the Commission for help. The Commission assigned a Counsellor from One Stop Centre to speak with the girl's parents. After thorough counselling on the matter from both the parties, the Counsellor was able to guide the girl to take up professional courses to equip herself first, and then prepare for jobs at metro cities. She was also advised to try part-time jobs at her own hometown to which the parents agreed. The parents were only worried about their daughter's safety in metro cities. The matter was resolved as the parents and the girl was able to find a middle ground.

(4). The Commission received a complaint from Ms. Chitra Wagh, the Vice President of BJP Maharashtra State regarding several rising incidents of sexual violence and harassment against minor girls and women in the State of Maharashtra. In the exercise of the powers conferred under Section 10 of the National Commission for Women Act, 1990, the Commission constituted a two-member Inquiry Committee under Hon'ble Chairperson, Ms. Rekha Sharma and Mumbai-based Advocate Ms. Mallika Noorani, to inquire into the alleged incidents. The Committee conducted the inquiry and gathered many observations. The Committee also met with Women-led organizations, discussed the findings with Director General of Police and Chief Secretary of Maharashtra in a formal meeting. The Inquiry Committee submitted its Report to the authorities and sought to take actions where necessary to safeguard women's safety, and also work on the recommendations of the Committee to effectively tackle the cases of violence on women in the state.

6. ONLINE MAHILA JAN SUNWAI CONDUCTED.

Speedy redressal of women grievances and effective disposal of cases is one of the intentions of the Commission. Since August 2016, the Commission created various alternate mechanisms and effort in strengthening the support systems to address women issues and protection of their rights, within the social and legal systems of governance. One of mechanisms formed by the Commission's effort is the 'Mahila Jan Sunwai'; that are largely organized yearly across the country in collaboration with District Legal Services Authority (DLSA). During the Mahila Jan Sunwai, the members and coordinators of the Commission along with DLSA's Advocate take active charge to expedite the cases joined by complainants, respondents and representatives from concerned law implementing authorities such as senior police officers, district magistrates and secretaries of the states. This process also allows a better working coordination and understanding with authorities and Commission, in order to identify, investigate and provide immediate relief to affected women. This year 2020-2021, the Mahila Jan Sunwai are being conducted through online conference, due to the pandemic situation around COVID19 safety guidelines. The online hearings started on 13th October, 2020, and shall continue until most cases are addressed/disposed of. Until 31st October, 8 hearings were organized in Delhi, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh. The Commission had appraised the authorities who participated in these hearings, to send detailed action taken report on all the cases that was deliberated for immediate solving and delivering justice.



7. UPDATES FROM NRI CELL

OCTOBER 2020:

Mode of Complaint	Complaints Received	Complaints Closed (Old+New)
Online	43	30

8. UPDATES FROM SUO-MOTU CELL

OCTOBER 2020

Cases Taken-up	ATR Replies Received (Old+New)	Cases Closed (Old+New)
23	19	05

9. SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTIONS OF SUO-MOTU CELL.

The Commission took up the incident of the media report on 'Hathras Gang Rape' that was reported across all media platform and shock the nation with contempt and cry for justice against atrocities on the young Dalit girl. The Commission wrote to DGP of Uttar Pradesh immediately seeking detailed information, status of investigation and action taken report on the case. On 27th & 29th September, the Commission received updates on the case from SP of Hathras. The below are some highlights received through detailed action taken report (ATR) in the Commission.

- On 14th September 2020, the police registered the FIR reported by the victim's brother alleging of assault and attempt to murder of her sister by few men.
- On the same night of 14th September, as per the police's ATR, due to the critical condition the victim was transferred to the Medical College in Aligarh for further treatment.
- On 19th September, the police recorded the victim's statement where she revealed that, she was molested and assaulted by few men. The police filed charge sheet under Section 354 of IPC in the case. The victim also identified the assaulters.
- As per the police's ATR on 22nd September, once again the statement of the victim was recorded in presence of her family members and the whole procedure was videographed. The victim had complained of 'gang rape'; and subsequently, the police filed charge sheet under Section 376D of IPC in the case.
- On 26th September, an interim compensation of INR. 4,12,500/- was released by the District Magistrate to the victim and her family.
- On 27th September, the police arrested four men accused in the crime, as per the statement given by the victim.
- On 28th September, the victim's condition deteriorated further and she was transferred to Safdurjung Hospital in New Delhi, for treatment. Unfortunately, on the same date as per the police's ATR, the victim succumbed to her injuries.

It was very disturbing for the Commission to learn that the cremation of the girl's body was carried out in haste by the police authorities. A member of the Commission immediately contacted the victim's family on phone and spoke to the brother, if any discrepancies occurred from the authorities and support needed from the Commission. The brother then confirmed, there were no family members present during the girl's body cremation. The Commission then contacted the DGP of Uttar Pradesh, and condemn on how the matter was dealt in the state without consent of the girl's family. The Commission sent a notice and sought for an explanation as to why and what led to the urgency behind cremating the body in the late-night hours, when there was no consent from the family members. Presently, the ATR on this matter is awaited in the Commission.

10. OTHER HIGHLIGHTS.

(i). HON'BLE UNION CABINET MINISTER, MS. SMRITI IRANI ADDRESSED AT UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE OCCASION OF 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF 4TH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN.

The year 2020 marks the 25th anniversary of 4th World Conference on Women, and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, which remains the most visionary and comprehensive roadmap for advancing women's rights globally. The year 2020 also marks a five-year milestone towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and the reaffirmation of gender equality as inextricably linked to achieving sustainable development for all by 2030.

In view of this progression, a historic gathering to call for political commitment at the highest levels for the achievement of gender equality;

recognized world leaders and UN Member States were invited to attend virtually, and to demonstrate the political will and leadership to ensure the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action.

The high-level meeting took place on 1st October 2020. From India, the Hon'ble Union Cabinet Minister, Ms. Smriti Irani addressed the meeting through a webcast on the UN WebTV, delivering her speech on marking the initiatives of India towards achieving gender equality goals, and priorities that ensured gender parity in all spheres of life. The excerpts from the Hon'ble Minister's speech: "I reiterate India's commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. I congratulate everyone for convening this high-level meeting on 25th anniversary of 4th World Conference on Women. India have recognized the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment in all aspects of our developmental agenda and elimination of all forms of gender-based discrimination. We have moved from a paradigm of women's development to women-led development. The Government of India took a series of measures for ensuring safety, security and wellbeing of women; and we continued to overcome the challenges during COVID19 crises. It included One Stop Crisis Centers to provide medical, psychological, legal, police & shelter facilities to women under common roof."



The high-level meeting held deliberations on the 25 years after adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action; and in context to new series of challenges that strike the world such as the COVID19 pandemic. The Experts of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) highlighted that even though 131 countries have passed laws to support women's equality, including increase access to healthcare and good quality education, and promoting women's political participation and representation—some countries are yet to reach gender parity in various segment. The current indents of world statistics still showed slow progress in the achievement of the intended sustainable goals. Furthermore, UNGA added the concern of COVID19 pandemic has underscored society's reliance on women both on the front lines of the response and at home; and while the pandemic's impact is putting at risk the hard-won gains for women's rights in these 25 years, women and girls continue to face disproportionate impacts with far-reaching consequences across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection. The UNGA reiterated due to the pandemic, statistics estimated for 2021, that 47 million women and girls will be pushed into extreme poverty, bringing the total to 435 million. By 2021, for every 100 men aged 25 to 34 living in extreme poverty, there will be 118 women, a gap that is expected to increase to 121 women per 100 men by 2030 (source: www.un.org)

Hence, the UNGA reminded all the Member States, Heads of States and Government and other leaders to prepare concrete actions and challenging commitments to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, including support from human rights councils and role of civil society organizations and youth.

For more information and editorial content of the high-level meetings, visit: www.un.org OR www.unwomen.org

(ii). OVER 50 ONE STOP CENTERS (OSCs) REVIEWED ONLINE BY NCW.

(From Women Safety Cell): Early this year, the Commission formulated a detailed proforma for gathering relevant information from OSCs, in order to research and improve effective services to aggrieved women. During the nationwide lockdown imposed to contain spread of COVID19, the Commission realized the role of OSCs to be most crucial at unprecedented times such as these, and owing to the surge in complaints, the Commission decided to support and coordinate with OSCs for effective redressal on women's grievances and initiating systematic support. With this approach, the Members of the Commission conduct regular inspections and surveys, through online discussions and sharing reports with the OSCs functionaries, including participations from all the State Commissions for Women. Whenever necessary, the Commission have been providing suggestions and timely interventions to the functionaries at OSCs. Several activities like plans of capacity building and other awareness programmes related to women services are identified to carry out before the end of the financial year. At present, over 50 OSCs were reviewed by the Commission, and shall continue to conduct these online coordination and reviews with OSCs covering all the States to support women safety and wellbeing.

**(iii). DIGITAL SHAKTI TRAINED 50K NETIZENS TILL 31st OCTOBER 2020.**

(From Capacity Building Cell): During the lockdown, the Commission took the opportunity to reach out to citizens through online training methods. The participants were able to access the e-training remotely from their home and personal devices to stay safe while staying engage in e-learning process. Under the Digital Literacy and Cyber Security programme, the Commission along with Facebook and Cyber Peace Foundation have been conducting cyber security training for girls, women including women police under four comprehensive modules that advances the understanding of online threats. This year covers the Phase-II plan and the programme targets to trained over 1 lakh netizens. The initiative is also known as "We Think Digital - Digital Shakti 2.0" campaign. It promotes the concept of 'Digital Hygiene & Safety' by empowering participants to be responsible netizens using the potential of the Internet in a smart, safe and responsible manner. Since 8th April to 31st October, 2020, the programme had trained over 50,000 netizens in over 100 sessions covering all the modules.

To know more about this programme or attend the online training sessions, visit our social media handles @NCWIndia or @DigitalShakti for regular updates.

**The 'We Think Digital' Training Modules:**

1. Misinformation & Online Safety
2. Responsible Online Behavior
3. Understanding Data & Digital Footprint
4. Cybercrime & Redressal

'We Think Digital' Trainings aims Netizens to be:

1. AWARE of their Digital Rights and Responsibilities
2. CHOOSE consciously by making Safe & Informed Choices
3. HYGIENE conscious by following Healthy Online Practices
4. RECOGNISE and Manage Online Risks
5. RESPONSIBLE Netizens following Online Rules & Regulations

(iv). 3RD REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON REVIEW OF CYBER LAWS AND IT ACT. CONDUCTED BY NCW.

(From Legal Cell): The Commission organized the 3rd Consultation on 29th October 2020 (North Region), to review the laws on Cybercrimes, the Indecent Representation of Women's Act, Information Technology Act and other prevailing laws in context to Information Technology Act. Earlier 2 Consultations were held in collaboration with Western and Eastern Regional Expert Partners. The Commission is yet to organized 2 more Consultations of the same with South and North-East Regions before the end of the financial year 2020-2021. For more updates on reports and progression of these Consultation series, check on www.ncw.nic.in for all notifications.

(v). NCW TAKES THE JAN ANDOLAN PLEDGE TO UPHOLD COVID19 APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOURS.

The Commission fraternity took the Jan Andolan Pledge on 9th October at the Commission's premises, to uphold and follow key COVID19 appropriate behaviours. The Pledge was to remind self and to encourage others in taking all necessary precautions that prevent the spread of Coronavirus at offices, homes and public spaces. The dissemination of the COVID19 Jan Andolan Pledge campaign was supported by the Commission through official website and social media handles.



(vi). NCW OBSERVED VIGILANCE AWARENESS WEEK.

To create awareness in the fight against acts of corruption, and to take part in reporting and to remain vigilant, the 'Integrity Pledge' was read out by fraternity of the Commission on 27th October 2020.



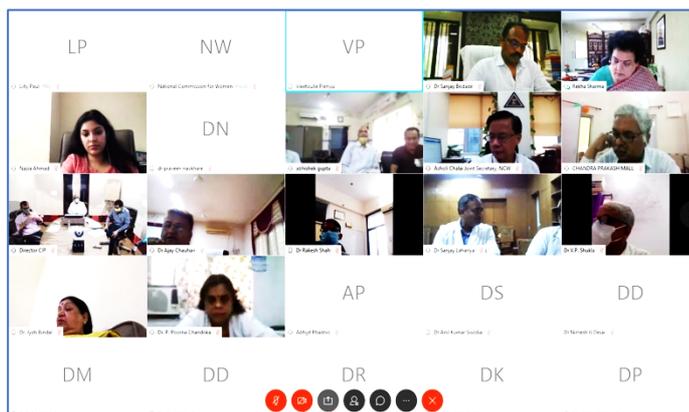
11. VIRTUAL MEETING WITH NODAL OFFICERS TO DISCUSS STATUS OF ACID ATTACK CASES ON NCW's MIS.

(From PHCH Cell): The Commission held an e-Meeting on 22nd October, 2020, with the Nodal Officers and representatives of the 24 States and Union Territories, to review and discuss on the cases of Acid Attack registered on website of the Commission's Management Information System (MIS). The e-Meeting was led by Hon'ble Chairperson, Ms. Rekha Sharma along with senior officers and coordinators from the Commission. The highlights of the e-Meet are summarized below:

- (i). Chairperson expressed her views that numbers of cases updated till date on the Commission's MIS was not adequate, as the numbers of the cases reported across the country and state-wise do not match with the Commission's MIS data. This was conveyed as a huge concern during the discussion, as the Commission has the mandate to safeguard women laws and protection of their rights, including safety of women from various atrocities such as Acid Attack crimes. The Commission also instructed all Nodal Officers to update the Commission's MIS with immediate effect.
- (ii). The Commission asserted its concern over the MIS data in view that Commission could effectively work when cases are reviewed regularly, in order to avoid discrepancies in delivering justice and other support or assistance to be given to survivors. The onus of responsibility must be equally shared.
- (iii). During the e-Meet, Chairperson expressed her concern over the non-payment of compensation to Acid Attack survivors that came to notice of the Commission. The Nodal Officers were requested to uphold the laws and schemes that support survivors in cases of attacks, such as the NALSA's Compensation Scheme for Women Victims/Survivors of Sexual Assault/other Crimes, 2018. The Scheme provides compensation ranging from INR. 3 to 8 Lakhs depending on the severity of the case. However, the Commission emphasized that, many States compensate from the interim order of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, wherein it must be wholly applied across all States/UTs which the Nodal Officers has to intervened to implement the central laws.
- (iv). The matters over several States/UTs who have not taken initiatives to revised the amount of compensation was also discussed, but 3 Lakhs as minimum compensation in case of Acid Attack must be maintained as per the interim order of the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

- (v). The Commission noted that 6 States/ UTs have not assigned Nodal Officers to oversee the crime reports. The states were Sikkim, Meghalaya, Kerala, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The Commission requested the representatives from these states to appoint Nodal Officers with immediate effect and appraised the Commission on the action taken.
- (vi). During the discussion, the Commission was disappointed to know from various reports that some States/UTs have not provided adequate and timely medical treatment/assistance to survivors of Acid Attack. This brought to the Commission's notice that more works needs to be done in these states, to ensure women legal rights and implementation of women welfare schemes and provision for strengthening their support systems.
- (vii). Additionally, the Commission felt that States/UTs delay in filing charge sheets, as most cases do not mention dates, status of investigation or progress of the prosecution or any records of the cases; hence the delay in updates indicates that cases are not dealt properly in interest of the survivors. The Commission insisted that the Nodal Officers must instruct the police authorities to take such cases at priority and follow strict timebound to avoid delay in investigation and filling charge sheets. The Nodal Officers must keep track at all level of the systematic coordination.
- (viii). The Commission have learnt that, due to pandemic situation, the case trails have drastically slowed down.
- (ix). The representatives from the State/UT of Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Goa (North District), Jammu & Kashmir, Dadar & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu informed of no cases of Acid Attack reported in 2020. In such case, the Commission appraised them to send monthly NIL report through emails.

The detailed report of the e-Meeting convened is currently under preparation, and will be send to PMO and concerned line Ministries, with recommendation of the Commission for further interventions to work on women safety and legal rights. For more information and Commission's report, check www.ncw.nic.in for regular updates.



12. WEBINAR ON NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY: GENDER SENSITIVITY & INCLUSION

(From Legal Cell): The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) was a historic effort and first omnibus policy after thirty-four years in India's education system. The NEP 2020 intends to bring about the structural change with fundamental principles that will guide education systems, individual institutions, with inter alia focus on the equality, equity, inclusion and access to quality education to every child. The NEP 2020 also measures to ensure and promote increased participation of girl children, from primary to higher levels of education through financial aid and other social welfare schemes. Women make up about half of all Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) and substantially underrepresented in education. The NEP Policy additionally recognizes the special and critical role that women play in society and in shaping social values and thereby, providing a quality education to girls is one of the key components.

The policy reaffirms that it has a multidimensional approach that covers every aspect to address key issues of educational development such as easy access for the students, ease of participation, reforms and quality of courses offered, equity and system efficiency, governance and management, facilities of research and development, and financial commitment involved in every stage. Furthermore, the Government of India constituted 'Gender-Inclusion Fund' to build the nation's capacity to provide equitable quality education for all girls as well as transgender students. The States are directed to utilize funds to implement priorities determined by the Central government critical for assisting female and transgender children in gaining access to education, including other provisions such as hygiene and sanitation focus, bicycles, conditional cash transfers, etc. The Policy aims to enable and scale effective community-based interventions that address local context, specific barriers to female and transgender children's access to and participation in education.

In this background, the Commission organized a dedicated online discussion on 20th October 2020, to lay down emphasis and understandings of several pertinent terms being used throughout the policy document, and the sessions were contextualized on the subject of gender and sexuality. The proposed point of discussion during the webinar sessions was as under:

- Equitable access to Quality Education with a Special Emphasis on how to improve Gross Enrolment Ratio for Girls and Women.
- Focus on Mainstreaming Gender under NEP: understanding Gender Inclusion Fund, encouraging development of Gender-neutral Teaching Modules and building capacity of Teaching Staffs.

The webinar was open to all and made an impressive event by participation of eminent women personalities from Education Administration, Academician, Students, Central and State Government Officers, State Women Commissions, Civil Society Organizations etc. The Commission have taken notes to various viewpoints discussed on the possible challenges, issues and constraints that may pose in effective implementation of the NEP 2020 Policy at States/grassroot levels. Currently the report draft is under preparation, and will be sent to concern line Ministries. To watch the full web version of this webinar, visit Facebook @NCWIndia dated: 20-10-2020. For more information and report, check www.ncw.nic.in for regular updates.



13. HIGHLIGHTS OF CHAIRPERSON'S ENGAGEMENT

1. NCW Chairperson Smt. Rekha Sharma was invited as Guest of Honor on a virtual conclave on Cyber Policing Best Practices Meet, where she delivered a speech on 'Trends in Cybercrimes Against Women & Children', held on October 16th, 2020, and collaboratively organized by International Justice Mission (IJM), Centre for Research on Cyber Intelligence and Digital Forensics (CRCIDF), Information Security Education and Awareness (ISEA) and Cyber Peace Foundation.
2. NCW Chairperson visited Maharashtra on 19th & 20th October 2020, and held meetings with various group of women from social worker and educationist background to initiate programmes and action for women safety, hygiene and health, skills and entrepreneurship training for empowering women in the State.
3. NCW Chairperson delivered an inaugural speech as Guest Speaker on a webinar session, 'Mental Health and Wellbeing of Women at Workplace: Challenges and Solutions', held on October 27th 2020, organized by Maulana Azad College, Aurangabad (Maharashtra).
4. NCW Chairperson attended as Panelist for a webinar session on, 'Gender Issues in Higher Educational Institutions: Challenges and Perspective' held on October 27th, 2020, organized by Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.
5. NCW Chairperson was invited to speak on a webinar session, 'Women Safety and Security on Rising Crimes', held on October 28th, 2020, organized by Bennett University (Times of India), Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

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