



Editor's Column

The Prime Minister in his maiden Independence Day speech strongly advocated the need for building toilets all over the country to get rid of the obnoxious reality of a majority of women having to relieve themselves out in the open. Expressing concern for women's safety and dignity, he suggested the need to build more toilets rather than temples.

According to a report prepared by UNICEF, around 60% of the people, from all over the world, who defecate in the open, belong to India. 70% of rural Indian households lack toilet facilities and one out of five households in urban areas does not have in-house provisions for sanitation. Thus, an overwhelming percentage of rural women, who are forced to wait till

nightfall to relieve themselves, face the risk of being sexually assaulted.

Though we are emphasizing the need for education of a girl child, it is still not a priority in our patriarchal society and lack of sanitation pushes it further down. A report by the Right to Education

FOCUS

BUILDING TOILETS

Forum shows that 40% of schools in India lack separate toilets for girls. Almost 23% girls drop out of school when they reach puberty and nearly 66% girls skip school every month during periods and one third of them eventually drop out.

Understanding the seriousness of the issue, the Prime Minister urged the Parliamentarians and the corporate sectors to help build

separate toilets for girls in schools across the country. The corporate and financial institutions have responded positively to achieve the mission. No sooner had the PM exhorted them to contribute to rural sanitation than several companies announced their intention to make toilet construction the centre-piece of their corporate social responsibility programmes. The Parliamentarians, cutting across party lines, have also responded to the clarion call of the Prime Minister to make India free of open defecation.

However, mere construction of toilets will not help unless they are properly maintained. Funds must be allocated for proper maintenance and trained staff must be appointed to ensure cleanliness and hygiene of the toilets.

Making a difference

Six newly-wed women in Uttar Pradesh's Kushinagar district walked out of their in-laws' houses rather than walk into the fields to ease themselves. Taking a cue from PM's call for a toilet in every household, the young brides protested against lack of the basic facility at their in-laws' houses and decided to return to their parents within weeks of tying the knot.

Status of Complaints received in July, 2014

Complaints Received in Writing

Month	Opening balance (Pending of previous month)	Complaints received	Number of complaints on which action taken		Complaints pending for action
			Previous	Current	
July 2014	22	3075	14	2933	150

The Commission took up suo moto cognizance of 15 cases

Consultation on Cyber Crimes

The National Commission for Women organized a consultation in New Delhi on "Ways and Means to Safeguard Women from Cyber Crimes in India". The Commission receives various types of complaints from women, pertaining to vulgar or obscene messages, hacking up of facebook accounts, uploading pornographic videos, morphing pictures etc.



Member Secretary Dr. Nandita Chatterjee giving the welcome address

As the present Information Technology Act 2000 and its amended version (2008) mainly cater to the commercial aspects of use and misuse of technology, the NCW took



A section of the participants

initiatives to have a fresh look into the Act from a wider perspective so that new sections of law could be included in the existing laws to cover a wide range of cyber crimes perpetrated against women.

The Consultation was divided into four sessions, dealing with issues such as nature of cyber crimes, legal provisions; role of social media. The fourth session was devoted to finalization of recommendations. A panel of experts from the Department of Information and Technology, the National Law School, representatives from the social media, judges, advocates, academicians and NGOs participated in the discussion.

The recommendations emerging out of the Consultation will be forwarded to the appropriate authorities.

Important Decisions

- ❖ The Centre has urged all state governments to provide 33% reservation for women in their police forces to effectively deal with cases of sexual violence and crimes against women.
- ❖ In a landmark order, the Bombay High Court has ruled that a married daughter does not stop being a part of her parent's family. A two-judge Bench has opined that Maharashtra's rules, which discriminate against a married daughter and exclude her from the purview of the expression "family" were unconstitutional and infringed on fundamental rights.
- ❖ The Centre has sanctioned recruitment of 10,000 women in Para-Military Forces' combat ranks to enhance their representation. This will enable women to be deployed in field duties and funds will be sanctioned for this purpose. At present, women account for around 1% of the strength of the para-military forces. The aim is to raise it to 5%.
- ❖ In a major benefit to all women employees, and those who go on long study leave, the government has decided to treat extended maternity leave and sabbatical periods during service to compute seniority for promotion. Under an order issued by the Department of Personnel and Training, the period spent by employees of the Central government on deputation, foreign service to another scientific post as well as the period of study leave, any other leave taken for improving academic qualifications, maternity leave, leave sanctioned in continuation of maternity leave and earned leave shall be taken into account while computing "minimum residency period", for promotion. Women with minor children can also take up to two years as child care leave.

Expert Committee Meeting

The first meeting of the expert committee on Legal, Political and Social Status of Women in North Eastern States was held on 31-7-2014 at the NCW conference hall in New Delhi.

The Chairperson, NCW Members and officials, Expert Committee members, representatives of North East State Commissions for Women and the Director of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region attended the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, Member Laldingliani Sailo, outlined the critical challenges faced by women of North East states, including, socio-cultural factors that place women at a disadvantaged position in every sphere of life.

The term of references included policy recommendations for development and empowerment of women, initiating policy level changes for better implementation of existing policies and schemes, and reviewing customary laws and other aspects related to development and safety of women. The representatives of North East states presented status reports with regard to women in their respective states.

The Committee decided the following plan of action—each NE state will constitute a sub-committee comprising



Expert Committee Meeting

(maximum 6 members) social activists, legal experts, academicians, etc. The sub-committee will develop a questionnaire as per the issues and concerns of each state and submit to NCW within one month along with item wise budget for approval. The main expert committee will again meet after three months to discuss the reports of the sub-committees and will prepare a draft report based on the reports of the sub-committees within 8 months and circulate to each sub-committee for comments, if any. The final report will be prepared on the suggestions received by NCW and sent to governments within 9 months.

Chairperson demits office

NCW Chairperson Smt. Mamta Sharma demitted office on 1st August on completion of her tenure of 3 years. Talking to the media persons, she enumerated the various initiatives taken by NCW during the last 3 years. Smt. Sharma also released a booklet on NCW's achievements on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, she said that it was imperative that the government and the media work together in a positive manner to improve the condition of women and put collective efforts for their empowerment. She said that during her tenure, NCW recommended new laws, suggested amendments in the sexual assault bill on rape and other laws relating to women, networked with State Women's Commissions, organised consultations and seminars on women-related issues and conducted several awareness and sensitization programmes for the police and the judiciary.

Member Dr. Charu WaliKhanna also demitted office alongwith the Chairperson on completing her tenure. A very proactive Member, she played a vital role in improving the status of women.



Farewell function of Chairperson and Member WaliKhanna

Members' Visits

◆ Member Adv. Nirmaia Samant Prabhavalkar visited Mumbai on 28th July 2014, to finalize the hearing of the case of a woman with regard to maintenance for her daughter from her husband. ● The Member visited the women cell of the Central Jail at Vadodara in Gujarat. There were 124 female inmates, who were accommodated in 10 wards of a newly constructed building. The building was neat and clean and regular health checkups, proper meals and legal aid were being provided to the inmates. Adult literary classes, computer classes and vocational courses were also conducted for women inmates.

◆ Member Hemlata Kheria visited district Deoria of Uttar Pradesh to inaugurate Maa Savitri Bai Phule Mahila Swavlamban Kendra at Malwabar Musahar Basti in Baghuchhat. The Kendra teaches alternative employment skills and fights against social evils and superstition. ● She also interacted with women from dalit and maha dalit community. ● Later, she visited Malwabar Musahar Basti and other villages of Udaypura and saw the plight of Musahar community, one of the most marginalized among dalits. She assured them of Commission's help whenever necessary. ● Member Kheria was the Chief Guest at a public hearing organized by Social Development Foundation for dalit and backward women. Women from Mushahar, Chamar, Pasi, Nonia, Turha, Devan and Kalandar community participated in the hearing. She listened to the issues brought to her notice and assured remedial action. ● The Member met Mrs. Urmila Singh, Hon'ble Governor of Himachal Pradesh and discussed women-related issues of Himachal Pradesh.



Member Hemlata Kheria with the villagers of Musahar



Member Shamina Shafiq at the launch of Oubler.com

◆ Member Shamina Shafiq addressed the Fifth International Media Conference on "Freeing Women from Violence" in Lucknow. Speaking on the occasion, she said India was a country of youth known for their innovative ideas, enthusiastic working style and a never-say-die spirit. They should be the agents of change engaged in changing the mindsets of the society to free women from violence and create awareness on gender equality. ● Ms. Shafiq attended a meeting of Internal Advisory Monitoring and Evaluation Committee of the Sarojini Naidu Centre for Women Studies. ● The Member attended the launch of Oubler.com, a social networking site at India Islamic Centre. She said that the social networking site should act as a powerful tool to empower women in all respects.

Helmets mandatory for Women

The Delhi Govt. has made wearing helmets mandatory for women riding two-wheelers. Sikh women, however, have been exempted on religious grounds.

According to the Delhi Transport Dept., 576 two-wheeler riders lost their lives in accidents in the city in 2012. Head injuries were the main cause of death; many of these could have been prevented or their severity reduced if the victims had worn helmets.

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