



Editor's Column

The year 2012 has been an eventful year for the National Commission for Women. Under the dynamic leadership of NCW Chairperson Ms. Mamta Sharma, the Commission resolutely and indefatigably strove for women's empowerment and elimination of gender violence and injustice. At this point of time, at the year end, an objective appraisal of the Commission's works and achievements is called for.

In keeping with NCW's mandate, which is to review constitutional and legal safeguards for women; recommend remedial legislative measures; facilitate redressal of grievances; advice the government on all policy matters affecting women, the Commission took various steps to improve the status of women and worked tirelessly for their social and economic empowerment during the past year.

The Commission carried out visits to states and union territories and acted suo moto with regard to complaints in order to provide speedy justice to the victims.

It dealt with issues of child marriage, dowry deaths, female foeticide, infanticide, domestic violence, indecent representation of women, sexual harassment at workplace etc. and sponsored legal awareness programmes, organised Parivarik Mahila Adalats and reviewed laws such as the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961, PNDT Act 1994, Indian

Penal Code 1860, MTP Act 1971 and the National Commission for Women Act, 1990 to make them more stringent and effective and sent its recommendations to the government.

The Commission organized workshops, consultations, constituted expert committees on economic empowerment of women, conducted

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NCW SURGES
AHEAD

gender awareness seminars and launched publicity campaign against female foeticide, violence against women, etc. in order to generate awareness in the society against these



Smt. Mamta Sharma

social evils. Along with empowerment, the Chairperson Ms. Mamta Sharma, laid utmost stress also on growth and development.

The Commission inaugurated mini video conference facilities with the State Commissions of Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nagaland and West Bengal. It also constituted several enquiry committees to enquire into alleged cases of atrocities against women.

In order to empower women through education and development, the Chairperson launched a campaign entitled "Mahila Adhikar Abhiyan", particularly, in the rural areas, to inform women of their entitlements and benefits under various government schemes and become aware of various women-related laws to deal with gender discrimination and atrocities committed on them.

In view of matrimonial disputes, particularly, with regard to NRI marriages, the Commission has been chosen as the Nodal Agency for dealing with complaints pertaining to such marriages. It has also started a 24x7 helpline for women in distress, organized street plays on women issues and rights and has launched an All-India campaign on issues such as sexual harassment at workplace, dowry, rape, domestic violence, as well as conducted special studies on various women related issues.

The NCW Chairperson along with a high profile team also met the then President Smt. Pratibha Patil and urged her to ensure 33% reservation for women in Parliament and State Assemblies. The NCW is still relentlessly pursuing the matter in all concerned forums.

Admittedly, NCW has achieved considerable success, yet there is no room for complacency. NCW pledges to strive harder to mitigate the sufferings of the women of our country and take appropriate steps to provide them gender justice and equity.

National Consultation on PC & PNDT Act

A one-day National Consultation on "Reviewing Strategies to Improve the Provisions of PC & PNDT Act" was held recently in New Delhi. The one-day review took stock of the efforts that have been made by the State Commissions for Women to improve the sex-ratio in the country. The objective was to bring together information on the safeguards that have been put in place to protect women's rights, especially, in the area of pregnancy tracking, reduction of violence against women resisting sex determination and for protection of witnesses and decoys.



At the consultation (from left) Member Nirmala Samant Prabhavalkar, Ms. Mamta Sharma, Ms. Minakshi Ghose and Anuradha Vemuri

NCW Member Adv. Nirmala Samant Prabhavalkar welcoming the participants suggested that the Chairpersons of the State Commissions for Women should be the monitoring head of the PC&PNDT Act, as has been done in Maharashtra to ensure its effectiveness.

Inaugurating the consultation, the Chairperson Ms. Mamta Sharma said that female foeticide was one of the most heinous crimes and the NGOs, the civil society and the media must work together to highlight these issues. Awareness programmes need to be conducted in colleges and universities in order to change the mindset of the society.

The programme consisted of two thematic sessions comprising - (i) Strategies to improve the provisions of PC & PNDT Act; (ii) Improving child sex ratio : reviewing state initiatives in which Chairpersons or representatives of the State Commissions and various state officials expressed their views. Eminent panelists, who spoke on the occasion, included Ms Anuradha Vemuri, Ms Suman Parashar, Dr. Sabu George, Ms Annie Raja, Ms. Varsha Deshpande, Ms. Akhila Sivasdas etc. After the question answer session and open house discussion, the recommendations were finalized.

Programme organised by Symbiosis

NCW Chairperson Ms. Mamta Sharma attended the inaugural function of Ignisense' 13, organised by the students of Symbiosis Institute of International Business at Pune.

Addressing a full house of students, faculty and staff of SIIB and the media she referred to the recent brutal rape in Delhi and urged the youths, who were the torch bearers of future India, to take initiatives to change the patriarchal mindset of the society with regard to women's equality before laws as well as their safety and security. She stressed that there were no dearth of good women-related laws in India but lamented the lack of proper implementation of the laws.

Later, she held a meeting with the Joint Commissioner of Police and other senior officials.



Chairperson lighting the lamp at the Symbiosis function

Members' Visits

● Advocate Nirmala Samant Prabhavalkar, NCW Member attended a legal awareness programme at Aurangabad in which the participants were informed about their legal rights. She explained the aims and objectives of NCW and distributed NCW publications to women and girls, who attended the programme. She also attended a legal awareness programme at Krishna Nagar Chowk, Nagpur Road, Chandrapur and discussed the legal rights of women.



Member Nirmala Samant Prabhavalkar addressing the gathering

The Member visited Nagpur to inaugurate the National Conference on "Contribution of Women in Indian Arts and Culture". Thereafter, she visited Kamla Nehru Mahavidyalaya and discussed women related issues with college staff and students. She inaugurated the women cell and spoke on the necessity of legal awareness and safety of women.

Ms. Prabhavalkar also attended a programme organized by Bharatiya Stree Shakti, Nagpur and addressed police officers, councillors, lawyers, medical professionals, social activists and the media. Later, she visited the Government Medical College and the Central Jail and held discussions with jail officials and women inmates.

● Member Shamina Shafiq inaugurated one of the biggest Educational Events in India organised by Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP) in Mumbai named as Career Fest 2012. The two-day career fest was aimed at providing guidance and exposure to students at a very early stage of their education. The Member, in her inaugural address, stressed on the importance of

organizing such festivals regularly and the need for encouraging girls to pursue higher education, especially, among the weaker sections of the society, including, the minorities. The programme was also attended by Dr. Waqar Azmi OBE, Chairman & Managing Partner at Waterhouse Consulting Group, U.K., Ex-Chief Diversity Adviser to Prime Minister, UK, Ex UK Ambassador for Intercultural Dialogue at European Parliament, Governor, Birmingham City University.

The Member was the Chief Guest on a programme on "Krishi Vikas Mein Aakashwani Ki Bhumika", organized by Media Association, Meerut. While expressing her views, she said that only 51% of the people in the country have access to Sanchar Kranti and there is a need to create awareness among farmers about Harit Kranti. She said that female farmers should work together with male farmers to get better yields.

Ms. Shafiq held a meeting with the Minority Committee at Lucknow and held discussions on various women-related issues with the NGOs and local social workers of Lucknow.

The Member attended a National Conference on "Honour Killing : The Mind & the Mindset : Challenges & Remedies" at Jaipur organized by Nehru Studies Centre and the Department of Political Sciences, University of Rajasthan in collaboration with the National Commission for Women. Speaking on the occasion, she said that killing women in the name of the honour of the family was the most blatant dishonour to humanity. She said that concrete steps were required to curb this menace.



Member Shamina Shafiq addressing the conference

● NCW Member Dr. Charu WaliKhanna attended a programme on Gender Sensitization and Code of Conduct at Workplace for employees of THDCIL at Rishikesh. Gender-related issues comprising Constitutional and Legal Provisions for Gender Equality, Right to property Maintenance, Matrimonial Law, Domestic Violence, Dowry Laws, Pregnancy and Maternity benefits, sexual harassment at workplace, etc were discussed. She also met the governor of Uttarakhand, Shri Aziz Qureshi and presented a copy of the 'Code of Conduct' developed by the Commission.

Dr. WaliKhanna attended an International Conference on 'Human Rights Concerns of Indian Diaspora' in New Delhi. Speaking on the occasion, she discussed the growing problems of desertion of Indian brides by their NRI husbands.

She also participated in a live programme on Law of the Land Programme on Rajya Sabha TV as well as a programme on Gyan Darshan on 'Constitutional Protection available to Women in India'. She attended a

programme on Shaam-e-Sufi organised by *Heal India* working in the field of women empowerment, education and health and for the development of rural artisans. She presented an award to Madhubani artist Ms. Mamta Jha, alongwith Chairman Yes Bank and President *Heal India*.



Member Charu WaliKhanna (second from right) presenting award to Madhubani Artist Ms. Mamta Jha alongwith Chairman Yes Bank and President Heal India

Important Decisions

- Coming to the rescue of a 20-year old, who was abandoned by her Bahrain-based father, the Mumbai High Court has ruled that an adult unmarried daughter is entitled to maintenance from her father. A father of three, the girl's father had agreed to pay maintenance to his two minor children but refused his eldest daughter saying that she was a major.
- Registering marriage will be easy now. A software has now been developed for this purpose. Under this new process, the applicants will simply have to log on to Delhi Government's website and fill the form. The application will be submitted on line and an acknowledgement slip will also be generated. The applicants will be given an appointment. They will be issued a certificate after verification of the documents on that very day. They will also be given an opportunity to make any changes in the forms once they visit the office. This can include changes in the list of witnesses, too.
- Information on all social welfare schemes in the capital will now be made available in all Gender Resource Centres (GRC) to reach out to the most vulnerable sections of the society. The GRCs will be taking the social scheme benefits to the doorsteps of the beneficiaries and apart from imparting training, these centres are also empowering women by providing them useful information.

Inquiry committees constituted by NCW

- Member Shamina Shafiq headed an enquiry committee comprising NCW Member Ms. Hemlata Kheria to enquire into a media report which appeared in *Asian Age* titled "Teacher, peon arrested for raping in Bastar Hostel". Reportedly, a teacher and a peon of a residential school in Kanker district of Bastar region have been arrested following allegations that they had been raping minor tribal girls at the hostel. Later, the Committee held discussions with the Police, NGO's, social activists and prominent citizens of Raipur.

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