



Editor's Column

In the wake of alarming rise of heinous crimes committed by juveniles against women, the Union Minister for Women and Child Development Smt. Maneka Gandhi said, she was seeking an amendment to the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 to ensure stringent punishment to juveniles accused of most brutal crimes like rape, murder and acid attack and should be tried as adults in regular courts.

As per the figures given by the Crimes Records Bureau in 2013, there was a 60% increase in rape committed by juveniles from 1316 in 2012 to 2074 in 2013. Two of every three rapes by juveniles in 2013 were by those in the age group of 16 to 18.

Yet, recently, the Mumbai Juvenile Justice Board has sent two underage rapists of a photojournalist and a telephone operator at Shakti Mills to 3 years in Reformatory School. Earlier, in spite of the nation wide outrage, the 17-year old, who gang-

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raped and killed a medical student in the most horrendous manner was too sent to a reformatory home.

In this context, the National Commission for Women supports Maneka Gandhi's view that juveniles, who commit crimes like rape and murder, must be treated at par with adults and also reiterates a Supreme Court observation that there cannot be "blanket immunity" for underage

offenders of serious crimes. In other words the gravity of the crime must match the gravity of punishment. However, what is necessary is that the Act must incorporate a case by case dealing of the offences and the Juvenile Justice Board must be given the authority to determine whether to deal leniently with juveniles committing petty crimes or refer to regular courts, crimes relating to murder, rape or a repeat offence. In view of the changing times, another suggestion could be that the age of a juvenile could be reduced to 16 from the present 18 years and the period spent in a correctional home could be substantially increased. All these facets need careful consideration and comprehensive debate before a final decision can be taken on this issue.

Chairperson visits State Crime Record Bureau, West Bengal

NCW Chairperson Ms. Mamta Sharma held a meeting with DGP West Bengal and other senior officers to discuss rise in crimes against women in West Bengal, specially, repeated cases of rape of minor girls. She urged that police officers at the police station level be trained to deal with victims with sensitivity and said for this purpose extensive training and awareness programmes need to be taken up at the level of OCs, CIs and officers at lower levels.

The DGP mentioned that extensive sensitization programmes have been undertaken for officers and men across the ranks and clarified that there has been a decline in the number of rape cases and kidnapping in West Bengal. The Chairperson was informed that trafficking of women was one of the major problems of the state and the police have given high priority with regard to arresting the traffickers. The Chairperson drew attention against cyber crimes against women and suggested taking strict action against the culprits. She appreciated the "Kanyasree" project of the Government of West Bengal for preventing child marriage and encouraging education among girls.

Status of Complaints received in June, 2014

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The Commission took up suo moto cognizance of 22 cases

The Nagaland State Commission for Women organized a discussion on Naga customary practices at Kohima in association with the Government of Nagaland. NCW Chairperson Ms. Mamta Sharma and Members Laldingliani Sialo and Nirmala Samant Prabhavalkar graced the event.

Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Sharma stressed the importance of a strong State Commission in Nagaland so that the body could exercise effective oversight in government in terms of women rights. Ms. Sharma explained the mandate of NCW to uphold constitutional and legal safeguards for women, reviewing of laws, administrative structure and judicial processes. She said that women must be given opportunity to participate in decision-making processes of elected governments at various levels and Nagaland must implement the Nagaland Municipal Act which provides 33% of urban elected seats for women.

Addressing the gathering, Member Laldingliani Sialo said that the position of Naga women stood challenged under the customary laws, which cutting across all tribes, bear commonality in denying women - rights of succession, disadvantaged position in divorce and



Ms. Mamta Sharma addressing the gathering. Sitting on the dais (from left) Member Prabhavalkar, Member Sialo.

casual or callous approach to crimes against women. To change this scenario, it would require a change of mindset deeply rooted in patriarchy. Naga elders must step in to safeguard the rights of women guaranteed by Indian Constitution.

Member Nirmala Samant Prabhavalkar said that customs were useful when the rule of law was not known but now we have the rule of law and tradition must give way to codified laws. The discussion was followed by interactive session, where the Chairperson and Members fielded questions from the participants.

Later, NCW held an interactive session with women of the southern Angami areas in Viswema village

council hall. Women from 13 Angami villages participated and shared their problems in undertaking economic activities. They pointed out that due to lack of marketing shed and cold storage facilities most of the vegetable and fruit products go to waste and requested the Commission to intervene with the authorities.

Meanwhile, the women of the area also said better facilities were needed in connectivity, health centres, water storage, solar lighting, loan facilities, widow funds and training in food preservation.

The NCW delegation also visited the women's wing of the Kohima District Jail. There was only one lady inmate, who said she was happy with the facilities provided to her.

NCW Chairperson inaugurates Women's Rights Stall at Puri

NCW Chairperson Ms. Mamta Sharma inaugurated a Women Rights Stall near Badasankha at Puri. She said the NCW stall during the famous Rath yatra last year had been a big success and it would be continued in all ensuing years. The stall had been set up at the initiative of head of "Honour for Women" national campaign and recipient of Stree Shakti puraskar 2013, Manasi Pradhan.

Later, audiovisual shows depicting the role of the NCW in empowering women were displayed for thousands of visitors. Besides, several other events on women's rights, poetry recitation, quiz and debates had been lined up at the stall. Visitors also filed their complaints at the NCW stall.



The Chairperson speaking at the Women Rights Stall. Manasi Pradhan is on her left.

Seminar in Shimla

NCW in collaboration with the Himachal Pradesh State Commission for Women organized a national seminar on "Women and Development in Himalayan Mountain Region: Issues & Concerns" in Shimla. Inaugurating the programme, Dr. Virbhadra Singh, Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh mentioned the new schemes for women announced by the Himachal government to empower them. Dr. D.R. Shandil, Minister Social Justice and Empowerment discussed the problems faced by women of Himalayan Mountain region.

Speaking on the occasion, NCW Chairperson Mamta Sharma elaborated on the initiatives taken by NCW to address women's issues. She said that there was need to educate women about rules and laws so that they become aware of their rights. She said it was necessary to curb social evils like female foeticide, child marriages, domestic violence, etc.

Member Hemlata Kheria in her introductory address said that the problem of women in Himachal were different from that of other regions of the country as most of the population lives in villages, which has no link with the cities. As most women work in agriculture, their minor girls are left at home to look after household chores. They are not sent to school thus creating a vicious circle of ignorance.

Earlier, Smt. Jenab Chandel, Chairperson HP State Commission for Women delivered the welcome address and introduced issues relating to the problems of mountain women. Later, experts, scholars, educationists participated in a panel discussion suggesting some doable recommendations. The recommendations would be sent by NCW to concerned authorities.



Sitting on the dais Ms. Jenab Chandel, Ms. Mamta Sharma, Dr. Virbhadra Singh, Dr. D.R. Shandil and Km. Hemlata Kheria

Seminar on Gender Violence

A national seminar sponsored by NCW on "Gender Violence and its Impact on Women Life Cycle with Respect to Dowry System in India", was held at Jaipur in Rajasthan.

Delivering the inaugural address, NCW Chairperson Ms Mamta Sharma underscored the importance of sensitization of the police and the justice delivery agencies because the attitude of the male police officers towards women victims of crime has always been biased and their complaints are usually misreported or downgraded. Later, representatives of NGOs, scholars from various universities discussed gender violence and dowry and suggested possible remedial measures. Apart from students from various universities, the participants also included women from rural villages, who shared their problems, particularly, related to dowry.



Chairperson Mamta Sharma (centre) at the seminar

A Success Story

NCW received a complaint from a woman resident of Ghaziabad in UP with regard to domestic violence and dowry harassment. The case was referred to the concerned police for submission of action taken report. After intervention of Member Shamina Shafiq, during the second hearing, both parties consented for mutual divorce and agreed to return the Stree Dhan and other belongings of the complainant. During the last hearing, the car given during marriage, was handed over to the complainant.



Members' Visits

❖ Member Shamina Shafiq attended a programme on "Empowerment of Women" organized by the National Forum for Peoples Rights at St. Thomas School, Gurgaon. Speaking on the occasion, she stressed that NGOs should come forward and help in achieving this goal. ● Ms. Shafiq attended a national conference on "Voice of the Victims' of Acid Attack". She said that very often family members were responsible for the acid attacks. She urged that there should be a law to ban sale of acids in the open market. She suggested instead of waiting for government assistance, the priorities of their families should be to give best possible medical aid at the earliest to the victim. The seminar came out with some recommendations which would be sent to the central government for further action.

● The Member visited Gulbarga jail and inspected the women cell of the jail. The women complained about the seepage on the roof of the cell and demanded appointment of a permanent lady medical officer.

❖ NCW Member Dr. Charu WaliKhanna attended a two-day-workshop on sexual harassment at workplace organized by the CBI Academy, in collaboration with UN women at Ghaziabad. Speaking on the occasion, she said it was imperative that Chairpersons and Members of the Internal Complaint Committees be trained on how to conduct such an enquiry. She stressed on the duties of the employers to provide safe working environment at the workplace and enquiries must be conducted in a non-threatening atmosphere of mutual trust and respect for each other. Each party must be given a chance to speak and women should not be penalized if they register complaints.

● Dr. WaliKhanna was the Chief Guest at NCW national seminar on violence against women mainly focusing on safety of women at Public places and Education Centres organized by Heal India at Patna. ● Dr. WaliKhanna also attended a programme jointly organized by Voith Industries Pvt. Ltd. And Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce and Industries on prevention of sexual harassment at work place at public sectors in Pune. Speaking on the occasion, the Member enumerated the salient features of Act and said that sexual harassment at work place infringes on the fundamental right of a woman to gender equality.



Member Shamina Shafiq (centre) at the Conference on Acid Attack



Dr. WaliKhanna, Member, NCW at Workshop on Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace in Private Sector in Pune

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❖ Ms. Hemlata Kheria chaired an enquiry committee comprising Ms. Mansi Pradhan to enquire into a media report titled "Murder of a girl student after gang rape", at Balugaon District, Odisha and also into another newspaper report titled "Pipli minor girl raped for three months".

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