



Editor's Column

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The Bill reserves 33 percent of seats for women in Parliament and the state Legislatures. If the Bill is passed, one third of the total available seats would be reserved for women in national and state governments. The Women Reservation Bill appears closest now to being passed with the BJP government expressing its

commitment to pass the Bill. President Pranab Mukherjee, while addressing the joint session of Parliament, also reiterated that the government recognizes the important role women play in the development of the society and growth of the nation. It is committed

FOCUS Women Reservation Bill

to providing 33 percent reservation to them in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies. Passing the Women Reservation Bill will also send a powerful consequential signal of women's empowerment.

While similar resolves for women quota in Parliament and Legislatures were expressed in the past as well, the fresh pledge sounds credible because of

the ruling party's absolute majority in the Lok Sabha as well as near-rout of the regional parties, who vetoed the enactment. Now the legislative landscape has shifted: Not only the central government is stronger, on this issue, it can count on the support of the Congress, the AIDMK, the Trinamul as well as the Left. So the odds of passing this legislation have never been as strong as now. This is a chance that must not be missed.

For more than a decade, the National Commission for Women has been relentlessly fighting for the enactment of the Women Reservation Bill. Now, that all major political parties have said they were committed to women's empowerment, the Commission hopes that all parties will join hands and pass the Bill.

Aur Ek Saach

The NCW Chairperson Ms. Mamta Sharma attended a play titled "Aur Ek Saach", written and directed by Aziz Quraishi at Kamani Auditorium in New Delhi. The play showcases how women are exploited by men in all spheres of life right from cradle to the grave – be it brutalisation through child marriage or marital rape, manipulation through religion or societal norms or abandonment through divorce or bigamy.



Ms. Mamta Sharma addressing the gathering

Making a difference

The Sulabh International has decided to give a sum of 1 lakh to a woman belonging to village Swadisopur in Patna district after she threatened to divorce her husband after 4 years of marriage because he did not fulfil his promise of constructing a toilet in his house. Appreciating the woman's courage, Sulabh said they would build a toilet in her house and would not let her go for a divorce.

Chairperson attends a function for Muslim Women

NCW Chairperson, Mamta Sharma was invited by the Chandrashekhar Azad Charitable Trust, Delhi, to attend a function to discuss women-related issues.



Ms. Mamta Sharma addressing the gathering



Chairperson planting a sapling

Speaking on the occasion, the Chairperson explained the benefits of education and exhorted women belonging to the Muslim community to send their children to schools and colleges for their future betterment. She also discussed several women-related laws and urged them to take advantage of these laws and assert their rights. Later, she planted saplings in the garden.

Single window for rape victims

The Delhi Police is assisting the health department in the creation of One Stop Centres for Rape victims as well as victims of sexual abuse at three government hospitals across Delhi. The victims will now get medical aid, rehabilitation facilities and counselling at one centre even before registering an FIR. There will be an additional room for a police officer to record statements of victims and complete other legal formalities.

Female officers of the rank of Sub-Inspectors and Asst. Sub-Inspectors will be on call, round the clock, to help the victims. A complainant no longer needs to go to or wait at the local police station to meet an officer to lodge her complaint. She can go directly to the centre, where the police will reach her and not the other way around.

The centres have been set up at Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Hospital in West Delhi's Harinagar, the Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Mangolpuri, and the Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital at Dilshad Garden in East Delhi.

Profile in Courage

A girl was returning home at 10 p.m. on a DTC bus. While she was de-boarding, a drunk man grabbed her. When no one came to her rescue, the girl took the matter into her own hand and caught hold of the molester. She dragged him to the police station and despite threats, got an FIR registered so that action could be taken against the man. She also demanded to know from the police whether women should stop travelling at night because of such goons roaming around the city?

Her brave act was appreciated by a trial court, which said that "the incident was of an ordinary Indian woman, which will not fall on deaf ears. What this brave-heart has done is something the city police were required to do. Her courage has to be saluted and her fight cannot be trivialized. She has taken on the eve-teaser and dragged him to the police station after catching him red-handed and handed him over to the law enforcement agency. Any indulgence shown to the accused at this stage will send a wrong message and will encourage similar acts. The message has to be loud and clear. Visible crimes need visible action - which is prompt and effective. Any person found to be indulging in eve-teasing will not be spared." NCW, too, salutes the braveheart.

Members' Visits

❖ Dr. Charu WaliKhanna was the Chief Guest at the two-day workshop on "Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace" organized by BHEL at HRD Institute in NOIDA. Speaking on the occasion, the Member said that it was the duty of the employer to provide safe working environment at the workplace and added that enquires should be conducted in a non-threatening atmosphere of mutual trust and respect for each other. She said complaints should be addressed without bias, irrespective of the stature of the person concerned and cases should be dealt with following the principle of natural justice and both parties should be given a chance to put forth their point of view. There should not be any negative consequence when women register complaints of sexual harassment. ● Dr. WaliKhanna was the Guest of Honour at a seminar on "Gender and Violence" organized by NCW in association with the National law School of India University in Bangalore. ● The Member was the Chief Guest at a three-day national consultation held in New Delhi, on "Situation of Indigenous Women in India: Ways Forward" in which more than 50 representatives from the North East and mainland India participated. ● Dr. Charu WaliKhanna and Member Shamina Shafiq toured Sikkim to study best practices in Prevention of Trafficking. They also visited the shelter home Mamtalaya run by an NGO and interacted with the girls between the age group of 15-35, who live together in one premise. Later, the Members made surprise visits to two police stations, one being centrally located in a market place and the other in a remote rural area. ● The Member inspected Singhtam police station about two hours away from Sikkim. The SHO informed the Commission that most of the cases occurring here were related to theft since the area has a floating population of migrant labour and there were two rape cases in the year 2014. ● The Member visited Kerala to attend a national seminar on "Problems and Safety of Female Indian Migrant workers". The Member interacted with women returnees from the Gulf countries in Thiruvalla, Thekkady and Munnar.

❖ Ms. Hemlata Kheria, Member, NCW alongwith Smt. Sushma Pandey and Shri Ashok Tewari inaugurated the District Office of 'Manav Adhikar Mission' at Manor in Maharashtra. ● The Member visited the scheduled tribe area at Dadra Nagar Haveli. She met tribal women of Konkana, Kathodia, Dhodia and Varly community to discuss issues related to child marriage, malnutrition, witchcraft, female foeticide, education for girls, availability of toilets, water, medical facility and violence against women. ● Ms. Kheria, visited Silvassa Jail, Dadra Nagar Haveli. She met officials and inmates and discussed about their problems. She found that the infrastructure of the jail was not satisfactory. She strongly recommended that renovation of the female ward should be done on a priority basis. ● Ms. Kheria, was invited to address as the Chief Guest a Seminar on "Women and Development in Darjeeling Himalayan Region : Issues and Challenges" in Kolkata. This programme sponsored by NCW was organised by Odisha Yuva Sanskritik Sansad.



Dr. WaliKhanna (second from left) at the NCW Regional Consultation on Gender and Violence



Member Hemlata Kheria alongwith Jail Superintendent Shri P. Parmar, ADM Shri Prashant & Shri Ashok Tiwari

◆ Member Shamina Shafiq inaugurated an interactive session on 'Violence against Women of Minority Community' organized by the Sikkim State Commission for Women at Lunsey in Sikkim, attended by Member Charu WaliKhanna, Principal Secretary, Social Justice, NGOs, Police officials and other stakeholders. Speaking on the occasion, the Member said that though problems of women are universal yet, women belonging to minority communities are more prone to economic, social, financial and educational deprivation. ● The Member attended a legal awareness programme in Lucknow where she said that awareness of legal rights, especially for youngsters, was the need of the hour. ● Ms. Shafiq inaugurated a seminar on minority women at Thiruvalla. ● Members Shamina Shafiq and Charu WaliKhanna held an interactive session with women belonging to Christian minority at Idukki district in Kerala, organized by the World Human Right Forum. ● Ms. Shafiq visited Thiruvananthapuram to chair a session on problems of safety of Indian female migrant workers organized by NCW and Kerala State Women Commission. ● Ms. Shafiq inaugurated a seminar on women and children at Christ Nagar School, Thiruvananthapuram attended by more than 1000 students. The Member while interacting with the students said that the concept of gender equality must be inculcated in children initially at home.



Member Shafiq addressing the interactive session

Bezbaruah Committee holds meeting with NCW

Ten members of the Bezbaruah Committee held a meeting with NCW in which Chairperson Mamta Sharma, Member Laldingliani Sailo and other officers were present. Shri Bezbaruah said that the committee was looking into problems faced by people hailing from North Eastern states, living in different parts of the country and would be suggesting remedial measures which could be taken up by the government.

The Chairperson informed the committee that NCW has recently set up a North East Cell in the Commission to give special focus on women-related issues of the North East region. Member Laldingliani Sailo, apprised the committee that the Commission has taken suo-moto cognizance of media reports regarding molestation and rape etc. of girls/women of North East and taken up these cases with the concerned authorities.

The Committee made the following suggestions : Sensitization of police and service providers in areas where women and girls of North East reside; NCW should arrange Legal Awareness Programmes in collaboration with District Legal Services Authority and recommend amendments in Section 153(A) of IPC; the Committee would send specific complaints, if any, to the Commission.



Chairperson (centre), Member Sailo, Mr. Bezbaruah, Committee members with NCW officers.

NCW's Intervention

The National Commission for Women has taken serious note of the incident in which a lady advocate from Arunachal Pradesh, was assaulted by 30-40 advocates of Tis Hazari Court. She had come to the Court alongwith a Naga girl, who had been sexually molested. The Commission took up the matter with the police, who, in turn, sent a detailed report to NCW.

The NCW Chairperson Mamta Sharma has also written to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court about the shocking assault that had taken place in the premises of the court and that, too, before the Metropolitan Magistrate. She had requested the Chief Justice to kindly intervene in the matter and take appropriate action as per law, against the persons involved in it.

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