



Editor's Column

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make mistakes but that does not mean they should be sent to the gallows. Such permissive attitude towards rape on the part of authorities explains why there is no effective deterrence against rape. The UP government must go beyond making token gestures. A start can be made by nabbing the real Badaun killers, irrespective of their caste, putting them on trial in a fast-track court and handing out exemplary punishment to them.

FOCUS

UP's SHAME

NCW has taken suo motu cognizance of the incident and ordered an enquiry. In the report, the members of the enquiry committee have held the Uttar Pradesh administration and the state government's caste bias, hostile attitude against people from lower socio-economic sector as well as police apathy, were solely responsible for the horrifying gang-rape and murder of the two girls. The commission has also summoned UP, DGP to NCW with the investigation

report. Meanwhile, the Union Home Ministry has written to the state government seeking an explanation as to why an FIR under SC/ST Act has not been registered in the case.

However, besides caste angle, prejudiced administration, insensitive police and a pervasive politician-criminal nexus, there is another dimension - lack of toilets, particularly in rural areas. Women have no option but to go out into the open making them vulnerable to sexual assaults. Hence, apart from the need for better policing and law enforcement, the UP government, who has been sitting on 293 crores provided by the centre for building toilets, must ensure better sanitation infrastructure in rural and urban areas to ensure safety for women.

It is high time the UP government took some firm steps to curb crimes against women; otherwise, the ruling party is destined to face similar electoral drubbing in the coming assembly elections as they suffered in the recent parliamentary election.

Status of Complaints received in April, 2014

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The National Commission for Women had organized a seminar at Itanagar in collaboration with Arunachal State Commission for Women and the Department of Women and Child Development on "Customary Laws on Marriage, Divorce, Inheritance and its implication on status of women".

Delivering the keynote address, NCW Chairperson Mamta Sharma said that there are 26 major tribes and many other minor tribes in Arunachal Pradesh and each tribe is having its own customary laws and traditional practices, some of which are good while some are irrational and biased against women. She stressed the need for broad-based consultation and discussions for modifying the customary laws in order to improve the status of women. The Chairperson further said that rights of women in inheritance of



Chairperson Mamta Sharma addressing the seminar

property is very important and called for statutory protection for women in terms of distribution of property, assets of the spouses, when a marriage is beyond repair. She also informed the gathering that NCW has recently set up a North East Cell in the Commission.

Speaking on the occasion, NCW Member Laldingliani Sailo expressed satisfaction to see so many women participating in all spheres, including in decision-making platforms like the State Legislative Assembly and Municipal Council. She said that the huge turnout was reflective of the fact that a consciousness was being finally spawned even amongst the women of rural and interior villages. "Empowerment and dignity are essential for women and



Chairperson and Members with the participants

given equal opportunities without any bias, they can achieve much more than men. However customary practices which stand in the way of women empowerment must be done away with," she added.

The program was followed by an interactive session where the State Women Commission Chairperson Gumri Ringu answered queries and gave constructive inputs.

★ Legal Awareness Programme at Ziro

A one-day legal awareness programme was held at Ziro in lower Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh. Addressing a huge gathering, NCW Chairperson called for a change in the mindset of the society and urged for proper implementation of laws besides putting in place a strong monitoring mechanism. She urged women to report any crime or violence against them and said no action can be taken against the offenders unless cases are reported in the police



Member Sailo, Chairperson (centre) and Ms. Lilabati with Gaon Burus (Panchayat heads)

station. Police also needs to be sensitized on issues where women as victims are to be questioned, she added. She expressed happiness that evil practices like dowry, child infanticide is less in Arunachal, but expressed concern over prevalence of child marriage, domestic violence in some parts of the state and advised NGOs working in those areas to address these issues.

★ Visit to Jolly Jail at Itanagar

The Chairperson visited the women ward of the jail at Jolly in Itanagar. She was happy to note that one women-police station is functioning at Itanagar and handling all women-related problems independently. She said that there was an urgent need for installing CCTV cameras in the jail, procurement of medical testing instruments and construction of quarters for the jail staff.



Chairperson taking part in the apathini dance with 'Daminda' a welcome song

Members' Visits

❖ NCW Member Dr. Charu WaliKhanna was the Chief Guest at a seminar on "Economic Empowerment in Context with Domestic Violence", at Indore. Delivering the inaugural address, Dr. WaliKhanna said it was important to understand domestic violence in the context of social inequalities. The man does not consider acts of violence against a woman as crime. She, on the other hand, blames herself for the violent behaviour of her partner and tells herself she deserves it. The Member urged women to take advantage of the Domestic Violence Act and said the complaint can be filed even by a simple telephone call.

● The Member inspected the Mahila Thana at Indore and assessed the functioning of women helpline.

● The Member attended the farewell function of Justice Gyan Sudha Mishra, Judge, Supreme Court of Delhi.

● Dr. WaliKhanna was the Chief Guest at a workshop on "Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place – the New Law the Employer Must Know", organized by Industrial Management Academy in New Delhi.



Dr. Charu WaliKhanna, addressing the Workshop on "Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace" in New Delhi

❖ Member Hemlata Kheria alongwith social activist Ms. Mansi Pradhan attended a national seminar on "Illicit Liquor Trade and Gender Violence" at Chandeshwar in Odisha organized by Odisha Yuva Sanskritik Sansad in collaboration with NCW. ● She visited an orphanage at Puri and interacted with 58 girls and 48 boys along with their house mothers and heard their grievances. ● Later, she met the officials of the orphanage and discussed with them the management of the orphanage and its problems.

❖ Member Adv. Nirmla Samant Pravalkar visited Amethi Jail (Women cell) in UP. She found the condition of the jail satisfactory. ● The Member attended a consultation on Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regular) Bill 2013 in FOGSI Headquarter at Mumbai regarding compensation to surrogate mothers.

● The Member had a meeting with the Additional Director General, Doordarshan Kendra, Mumbai, to discuss telecast of live programs on every Monday entitled "Sakhi Sahyadri".



Member Kheria (third from left) and Mansi Pradhan sitting on the dais

❖ Member Shamina Shafiq attended a social leadership programme at Amity campus aimed at grooming Amity students to become leaders and change initiators. As a part of the programme, students formed teams, decided the issues they wanted to work for, did intensive research through field study, surveys, case studies, designed plan of action, generated funds and worked with NGOs at the grass-root level. ● The Member attended the second meeting of the Expert Committee on "Violence against Women of Minority communities in India". ● Ms. Shafiq visited the district Jail at Sitapur and Hardoi District jail in UP to study the situation of women in custody. She suggested that NGOs and social activists should play a more



Member Shamina Shafiq addressing the gathering

pro-active role in imparting vocational training, counselling, legal aid, healthcare in the jails.

Important Decisions

- ❖ The Delhi Transport Corporation, in order to make travelling in buses safer for women, has decided to install close door circuit TV cameras in the buses. In the first phase, 200 AC and non-AC low floor buses will get CCTV cameras. If the system works satisfactorily, the Corporation will install cameras in the rest of the fleet. Safety of women in public transport has become a major issue after the 23-year-old para-medic was gang-raped in a bus and later thrown out from the moving chartered bus.
- ❖ In a significant judgement, the Supreme Court has ruled that it is not necessary that a victim should have physical injuries, if medical evidence establishes sexual assault. The ruling is particularly significant as many rape accused are going scot-free due to absence of injuries on the victim's body or any marks of struggle.
- ❖ The Haryana government has notified an amended scheme to provide adhoc relief or compensation, medical reimbursement and rehabilitation facilities to women victims of acid attacks. A compensation of Rs. 3 lakhs would be given to the acid attack victims, who suffer defacement, loss of limb or parts of body and go for plastic surgery. Out of the total amount, 1 lakh would be paid as adhoc relief to the victim within 15 days of the accident. The balance of Rs. 2 lakh would be paid within two months.
- ❖ The Supreme Court has recently given an order that a rape victim should be taken directly to a magistrate for recording her statement within 24 hours of the crime in order to fast-track rape trials. The court said that there was no need to record her statement first before the police and again before a magistrate. This new procedure, would put an end to repeated recording of the statement causing delay in the trial.

Enquiries undertaken by NCW

- ❖ Member Hemlata Kheria chaired an enquiry committee to look into the media report titled "Panchayat Mein Mahila Ko Nirvastra Kiya" at Tikamgarh in MP. A detailed report has been submitted on 20.5.2014.
- ❖ She also chaired an enquiry committee to look into a media report "Women are not allowed to go upstairs due to superstition" at Kitora village, in Dabra district in MP. A detailed report has been submitted on 20.5.2014.
- ❖ Taking suo motu cognizance of the gangrape and murder of two cousin sisters at Badaun, the NCW constituted an enquiry committee under the Chairmanship of Shamina Shafiq with Member Hemlata Kheria and Ms. Sudha Choudhary as Members. The enquiry report has been submitted.

From the Complaint Cell

- ❖ Ms. Amrita (name changed) was married to one Aditya Raj of Bundi district on 30-4-2012. Soon after her marriage, she was being tortured by her in-laws for dowry and when she refused to comply with the demand of Rs. 5 lakh, she was thrown out of the house. The family members had also taken away her streedhan and important documents. After receiving her complaint, the police station of Hindoli started enquiry into the matter. The case was brought before the Commission and at the initiative of the Commission, the Rajasthan High Court ordered the in-laws and the husband to pay a sum of Rs. 25,00,000 to the complainant, out of which half the amount had been deposited in the court.
- ❖ Four years after a Manipuri girl was gang-raped in a moving tempo by 5 men in Dhaula Kuan, the survivor has been awarded Rs. 1.5 lakh after she wrote a letter to NCW. In her letter, she had written that the incident had left an indelible scar and she had to cut herself off from the society. In the wake of the letter, the NCW Chairperson Mamta Sharma, wrote a letter to the Lt. Governor of Delhi for his personal intervention and that she be given an ex-gratia amount so that she can look after herself. The matter was also taken up by NCW Member Laldingliani Sailo. She wrote a letter to the Chief Secretary of NCT of Delhi with a request that an ex-gratia amount could be given to the survivor to help her in her rehabilitation. At NCW's initiative, the Delhi South West District Legal Cell Services Authority awarded her an interim compensation of Rs. 1.5 lakh, after her letter written to NCW was forwarded to the authority.

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