



National Consultation with State Women's Commissions

The National Commission for Women organized a two-day consultation with the Chairpersons and Member Secretaries of the State Women's Commissions in New Delhi.

Speaking on the occasion, Smt. Krishna Tirath, Minister of Women and Child Development said that her ministry has made a paradigm shift in its approach to the social sector issues from purely a welfare-oriented approach to the holistic empowerment of the marginalized. She asked the State Women Commissions to rise above their political affiliations.

In her welcome address, Dr. Girija Vyas, NCW Chairperson said that the State Commissions had a



Dr. Girija Vyas and Smt. Krishna Tirath with State Commission Chairpersons

very important role to play as issues of women empowerment differed from state to state and the State Commissions are aware of the local conditions prevailing in their states

and knows how best to address them. She said that committees should be formed at all levels for better coordination among the NCW, NGOs and women organizations. She also favoured cooperation among SAARC countries to deal with incidence of trafficking.

Later, speaking to the reporters, Dr. Vyas expressed her disappointment over NCW's recommendations not being given due importance by the government. She said that out of 21 reports submitted by the Commission during her Chairmanship, only 8 had been tabled in the Parliament.

Former NCW Chairperson Dr. Mohini Giri suggested that members of the National Women Commission should be selected on the lines of the



At the Consultation Ms. Ranjana Kumari, Dr. Mohini Giri, Dr. Girija Vyas, Smt. Krishna Tirath, Dr. Syeda Hameed, Shri V.K. Sikri, Ms. Yasmeen Abrar

National Human Rights Commission to make it more apolitical; otherwise how could it be a statutory autonomous body?

She also questioned as to why the Commission's reports were not tabled in the Parliament and suggested formation of jail adalats for speedy justice for women, who are languishing in jail for years together.

Dr. Kiran Bedi, in her address, urged the State Commissions to use the media, the corporate industry to hold awareness programmes so that women become aware of their rights. She suggested that the State Commissions should conduct joint programmes with the police and the NGOs and if necessary engage a decoy to find out what the police did with the complaints received from women. She suggested liberal use of the internet for registering complaints to the police website and

if no action was taken, to go for RTI.

Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Ranjana Kumari said that three major agenda of the Commission should be to get more money, more power and more dignity for women. Speaking on the Reservation Bill she said that women's organizations should put collective pressure on the

Parliamentarians to pass the bill.

The other issues taken up during discussion included sexual harassment at workplace, sexual assault, marriageable age for girls, misuse of dowry legislation, domestic violence, gender budgeting, PC and PNDT Act, trafficking honour killings, etc.



At the Consultation Ms. Yasmin Abrar, Dr. Girija Vyas, Ms. Wansuk Syiem, Ms. Zohra Chatterji

Meeting with News Broadcasters

The National Commission for Women recently organized a meeting with representatives of News Broadcasters Association (NBA) and Broadcast Editors Association (BEA) in order to share and discuss the concerns of the Commission on issues related to indecent representation of women in the media and the need for self-regulation.

Speaking on the occasion, NCW Chairperson, Dr. Girija Vyas said that the Commission strongly favoured self-regulation by the media as the preferred mode of regulation in keeping with the right

to freedom of speech as enshrined in the Constitution. She said that

while the news channels were by and large responsible in their



At the meet with News Broadcasters (from left) Member Secretary Ms. Zohra Chatterji, Ms. Annie Joseph, Dr. Girija Vyas, Mr. Shazi Zaman, Mr. N.K. Singh

behaviour, the entertainment channels required regulation to ensure propagation of right content. In the case of Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act Dr. Vyas suggested that the provisions need to be effectively amended to prohibit indecent representation of women in advertisements which denigrate women.

While speaking on “honour killings” the Commission sought severe punishment for people, who give provocative statements

condoning the so called “honour killings” a term, glorifying a heinous and barbaric crime. Dr. Vyas said the police and the government need to ensure that the victims of such crimes, if they survive, are provided safety and rehabilitated.

She suggested that while reporting on crime, news channels should publicise the penalties for the offence and whom to approach for redressal.

Ms. Annie Joseph, Secretary General (NBA) while appreciating the initiatives of the Commission said

that they would be happy to collaborate with NCW for organizing training workshops for crime reporters.

Mr. Shazi Zaman, President, Broadcast Editors Association assured that news channels would get more and more ethic-centric as they evolved. The discussion also covered issues like need to establish legitimacy and acceptability of laws, their violation & implementation and the need to train and sensitize the police and judicial authorities.

Meeting with President Pratibha Patil

The National Commission for Women recently held a national consultation with the State Women Commissions for two days. After the deliberations were over, the Chairpersons and Member Secretaries of all State Women Commissions led by NCW Chairperson Dr. Girija Vyas called on the President Smt. Pratibha Patil.

Dr. Vyas explained the various activities undertaken by the Commission and the recommendations that emerged during the two-day consultation.

While appreciating the role played by NCW Chairperson, Smt. Pratibha Patil said that the State Commission Chairpersons should act as agents of social change. She said

that a national mission on the socio-economic empowerment of women was being set up and for implementation of laws relating to women. The Commission’s should create awareness at all levels. She said that violence and exploitation should not be tolerated by women and their fight for right should take the shape of an All-India movement to mobilize support at every level.



Dr. Girija Vyas, State Commission Chairpersons with President Smt. Pratibha Patil

Important Decisions

● **2nd wife can't get maintenance**

The Bombay High Court has ruled that a Hindu woman, who marries an already-married man, cannot claim maintenance later.

A division bench in Mumbai held that such a woman cannot claim maintenance under the Hindu Marriage Act, or even the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (HAMA).

A second marriage (when the first spouse is alive) is null and void in Hindu law, the High Court emphasised.

● **Threat by jilted lover can be abetment to suicide: HC**

A threat by a jilted lover to “destory” a girl’s life which leads to her suicide is a clear case of abetment of suicide, the Bombay High Court had held.

The attempt to blackmail through photographs would amount to “abetment of suicide” as defined in the IPC, the court held.

● **Muslim man’s marriage void if wife doesn’t convert to Islam**

The Allahabad High Court has held that a Muslim man’s marriage to a woman of another religion shall be considered void and against the tenets of Islam if he fails to get her converted before marriage.

In its order, a division bench also ruled that remarriage of a Muslim man shall be held void if he abandons his first wife without divorcing her and fails to treat children born of the marriage in a fair manner.

● **‘No change in marriage act’**

The government has ruled out any changes in the Hindu Marriage Act to ban marriages within the same gotra (sub-caste), a demand raised by Khaps.

The Law Minister Shri M. Veerapa Moily said, “There is no such proposal before the ministry. We have recommended doing away with the mandatory 30-day notice period required for registering marriages under the

Special Marriage Act, but we are not doing anything on the Hindu Marriage Act”.

According to Section 3 of the Hindu Marriage Act, two persons are said to be in the degrees of prohibited relationship “up to third generation in the line of ascent through the mother, and the fifth in the line of ascent through the father”.

The Law Ministry said “Going beyond degrees of prohibited relationship to declare the marriage illegal is not legally advisable”.

● **‘Mother has first right over a daughter’**

A Delhi court told a father, who ran away with his daughter without informing his estranged wife that the mother has the first right over a daughter. The remarks came after the court directed the father of a minor girl to handover her custody to his wife.

From the Complaint Cell

The National Commission for Women had taken suo-moto cognizance of the alleged gang-rape of a 9th class student of Behat Town, Saharanpur Distt., U.P.

Letters were sent to DGP & SP requesting for investigation into the case and later submitting an action taken report. The DGP and the SP reported that a case had been registered in the court under section 363/366/376/352/502 of IPC and one accused has been arrested and another has been chargesheeted.

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