



## Editor's Column

The recent incident of a young woman being molested, assaulted and stripped outside a pub, late in the evening, by about 20 men in full public view for half an hour, in a busy area of Guwahati, has shocked and shamed the nation. But what is more reprehensible was that though the incident was witnessed by hundreds, not a single person came to her rescue. To cap it all, the police arrived half an hour late. Till now, only 12 men along with the main culprit have been arrested. This shows how victims of crimes, particularly women, receive poor support from the police or administration.

This incident has once again highlighted the issue of safety of women. The Assam DGP's remarks, when questioned about the slow pace of apprehending the culprits, though the perpetrators could be clearly identified from the video, further reiterated the low priority given to crimes against women. He said that the police are not an "ATM Machine" and can't deliver instant justice. Instead of taking instant action against the hooligans, he tried to shrug off his responsibility of apprehending the culprits, while trying to cover up for his apathetic force.

Admittedly, the incident at Guwahati is a case of street sexual harassment, a growing form of abuse, as more and more educated women are joining the workforce.

Deeply concerned about the incident, the National Commission for Women, taking suo motto cognizance



*Chairperson handing over the recommendations of NCW to the Chief Minister as Member Prabhavalkar looks on*

of the event sent a team to Guwahati led by NCW Member Wansuk Syiem for an enquiry. Later, NCW Chairperson Ms. Mamta Sharma along with Adv. Nirmala Samant Prabhavalkar, Member

FOCUS

Night of Shame

NCW, met the Assam Chief Minister and handed over the report submitted by the enquiry committee along with the recommendations.

The Chairperson and the Member also met the victim and assured her of financial and medical help as well as rehabilitation through the state government. They also met the Chief Secretary, the DGP Assam, IG Assam and discussed security measures, specially, for women.

The NCW has recommended quick trial of the culprits and conviction through a fast-track court in a time-bound manner as well as setting up of

special police pickets with women police at all 128 pubs up to 10:30 PM for the security and safety of women. The police should also take immediate action in such type of incidents, without going into the question of jurisdiction, so that the victim gets immediate police help. The pubs should have CCTVs and the State must have a 24-hour women helpline and women cell in every police station and strict action must be taken against the onlookers, who watch as mute spectators.

It is unfortunate that barring a few, in many states in India, outraging the modesty of a woman still falls under section 354 of the Indian Penal Code. It is a bailable and cognizable offence. The only way the culprits can be punished in proportion to their crimes, is by amending the IPC, which would provide stringent punishment and making the offence non bailable, so that the perpetrators would think twice before indulging in any form of sexual assault.

## Mahila Adhikar Abhiyan

Sponsored by NCW, Shri Aasra Vikas Sansthan, Udaipur, organized a Mahila Adhikar Abhiyan at Jaipur, in order to empower women by generating awareness about their rights so that they get justice and dignity, within their families and communities.

Inaugurating the campaign, NCW Chairperson Ms. Mamta Sharma said that the biggest factor responsible for their backwardness was their lack of awareness about their rights and entitlements. She mentioned about NCW's initiatives in making the country a safe place for women



*A view of the audience*

and narrated the various schemes being introduced by the central and state governments to empower women.

Elaborating on the various types of atrocities that women face, such as domestic violence, dowry deaths, kidnapping, molestation, eve-teasing etc., she said that in India, women constitute the major economically oppressed group and equitable social order could never be established unless women are given equal rights with men. She reiterated that NCW was committed to provide comprehensive development and empowerment to women.



*Chairperson addressing the gathering*

## NCW takes suo motto cognizance of Rumi Nath case

NCW had set up an enquiry committee led by Member Wansuk Syiem to enquire into the incident of assaulting and attempting to rape Smt. Rumi Nath, an MLA of Assam, by a violent mob. The Committee met Dr. Rumi Nath at her official residence at Dispur and found that her body bore marks of injury and her face was swollen.

The DGP informed the enquiry committee that he had written a letter to SP Karimgunj asking for an action taken report with copies of FIR and medical report. The committee has recommended strict action should be taken against the perpetrators and proper police escorts should be provided to public representatives for their safety and security.



*Member Wansuk Syiem with Ms. Rumi Nath*

## Members' Visits

● NCW Member Ms. Shamina Shafiq attended a seminar on “Overseas Marriages” organized jointly by the Punjab Police and the National Commission for Women in Jalandhar. Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Shafiq said that abandonment of brides, jilted spouses, criminal breach of trust, cruelty by the husbands, bigamy and adultery are some of the common offenses that are committed in NRI marriages. While the criminal investigation and trial in India can be tarry, jurisdictional objections thwart and delay punishment.



*Member Shamina Shafiq addressing the seminar on 'Overseas Marriages'*

She said that it was necessary before NRI marriages take place, to check the credentials of the NRI grooms because in case things go wrong, women's recourse to justice gets compromised as such marriages are governed not only by the Indian legal system but by the more complex international laws of the other country.

Member Shamina Shafiq also attended the All-India Muslim Women Conference “IQRA 2012” in Jaipur. Speaking on the occasion, she said that Muslim families must encourage girls to avail of opportunities that are available to them. Later, she held a meeting with the Rajasthan State Women's Commission.

On her visit to Sitapur, Ms. Shafiq held a meeting with the members of Bhartiya Muslim Mahila Andolan and discussed issues pertaining to minority community. She also visited the District Mahila Jail.

Ms. Shafique attended a seminar on problems of rural college going girls at Rahimbaad, in which women expressed their inability to convince the male members to send their girls to colleges situated at a distance. Later, at Kashraila in Sitapur, she held a meeting with the activists of Mahila Samakhya,

● Member Dr. Charu WaliKhanna attended a seminar organized by Defense Research and Development Organization on Protection of Women from Sexual

Harassment at Workplace in New Delhi. Speaking on the occasion Ms. WaliKhanna said often women have to face discrimination, sexual harassment and unwelcome passes and lewd remarks. Though, at present, there is no national legislation to deal with sexual harassment but the National Commission for Women has played a key role in drafting the law and the Bill is soon to be passed by the Parliament.



*Dr. Charu WaliKhanna (2nd from left) at the Convention*

Ms. WaliKhanna was the Chief Guest at “Domestic Workers Day - Celebrating Anniversary of ILO Convention 189”. She said that unfortunately domestic work is most often not regarded as “real work”. Domestic workers are tagged as “maids”, “servants”, “helpers” and a stigma accompanies this tag lowering their self-esteem. She said that NCW was seriously concerned about the issue as a large number of domestic workers are women and prone to abuse, exploitation and trafficking. She told the gathering of about 1000 domestic workers that NCW had included domestic workers as “workers” and “dwelling house” as “work place” in the proposed Bill.



*Domestic workers at the convention*

Ms. WaliKhanna also attended the programme on the “problems of girl child, and its solution” organized by the Delhi Women’s Association and All-India Women Conference in New Delhi. The participants included over 100 girls, who were counselled on the problems of abuse at home by relatives or parents and how to make a police complaint. They were also guided on issues of love marriages, relations with parents, safety of girls when they go out alone at night, verification of boys they go out with, etc.

● NCW Member Nirmala Samant Prabhavalkar attended the North and West Region Consultation on ‘Violations related to women targeted as witches’, supported by NCW and organised by Partners for Law in Development and Mahila Jan Adhikar Samity at Ajmer.



*Member Nirmala Samant Prabhavalkar addressing the gathering*

Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Samant outlined four major concerns related to witch hunting. They are lack of affordable health facility, police apathy, lack of awareness among women of their rights and inadequacy of the present law. She said poor, marginalised, unmarried women, widows and deserted women are mostly termed as witches with a view to grabbing their property. Ms. Samant suggested stringent punishment for the culprits and also assured the victims all possible help on behalf of NCW.

● NCW Members Dr. Charu WaliKhanna and Hemlata Kheria visited Rewari in Haryana to enquire into an incident in which a woman was abducted and raped by three men.

They also visited Pautaudi village in Haryana and enquired into an incident in which a young couple, who married against the wishes of the family, was shot dead by the brother of the girl.

## Important Decisions

### ● **Minimum 7-years term mandatory for rapes: Supreme Court**

Ticking off the Rajasthan High Court, for reducing the punishment of two convicts in a rape case, the Supreme Court, said that rapists should be awarded a minimum sentence of seven years, which can be reduced only in special circumstances. The court passed the judgement while upholding an appeal filed by the Rajasthan Government challenging the High Court decision to reduce the sentence of two rapists without recording any special reasons for taking the lenient view.

### ● **Fight against foeticide**

The Rajasthan government has notified setting up of seven new courts for speedy disposal of pending cases under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act of 1994. The courts have been set up in Ajmer, Bharatpur, Bikaner, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kota and Udaipur. The government has also issued orders to instal “silent observers” in sonography machines during the next three months.

### ● **Women cannot ride without helmets in Delhi**

The Delhi State Government and the Delhi High Court have said that all women riding on two wheelers will have to wear helmets. The High Court has given the Delhi Government two months to make changes in the law governing road safety.

### ● **Women cops for rape cases**

The Delhi Police’s decision to allow only women officers to investigate rape cases has received approval by women activists and city girls because it is very humiliating for a woman to report a rape case, in a room, full of men. They hesitate to reveal the details, which makes their cases weak.

### ● **Tarnishing the reputation of spouse amounts to cruelty**

The Supreme Court has ruled that harming the reputation of one’s spouse amounts to cruelty and thus entitles the aggrieved husband or wife to seek a decree of divorce.

*for further information visit our website at : [www.ncw.nic.in](http://www.ncw.nic.in)*