



Rashtra Mahila

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Editor's Column

The crime scene in Delhi has become so predictable. Almost every day, a shocking incident of rape is occurring, more horrific than the last. The latest addition to the spiralling crime graph in the capital is the abduction and rape of a Delhi University student by four men inside a car, near Dhaula Kuan.

Deeply concerned, the National Commission for Women held a meeting with the Police Commissioner at the Commission. The Commission's concern was conveyed in no uncertain terms to the Commissioner for not taking immediate and appropriate action after it was informed about the girl's abduction in an area bustling with people and traffic at all hours. The four criminals had dragged the girl in full public view, sped away and after two hours had the temerity to drop the girl at the same spot. And all this while the cops were looking away; not only the ones in the police posts but also those, who keep moving about the highway in their patrol cars. So much for Delhi Police's slogan 'with you, for you, always.'

The police, in this case, is indeed accountable for its failure to nab the culprits, despite receipt of immediate information about the abduction from the victim's friend, who managed to escape. While the officers assumed that the car had gone towards Gurgaon and alerted the Gurgaon police (instead of alerting all its vans stationed at different parts of the city, sealing all exit and entry points) the four men drove around the city, crossing some high security areas, including Rajghat and

repeatedly raped the woman inside the vehicle.

They were not stopped even once by the police manning the heavily barricaded check points spread all over the city. Therefore, it is not enough to nab the culprits, who deserve the severest punishment, it is also important the policemen, too, be pulled up for their negligence and apathy. The NCW in its meeting with the Police Commissioner, has suggested increase in the number of women in the police force from the current 4% to 10 percent; more counselling centers for women and a women's desk at every

Focus

RAPE &
POLICE LAXITY

police station exclusively to deal with women related crimes. It further emphasized that the police helpline numbers for women should be available at all institutions in the city, and most importantly, the Government should seriously consider speedy trials and stricter laws for the perpetrators of such heinous crimes.

NCW Visits Injured Anganwadi Supervisor

The National Commission for Women took cognizance of a heinous incident in which Ms. Shakuntala Verma, an Anganwadi Supervisor of Dhar Distt., Madhya Pradesh, was attacked grievously by a youth on May 10, 2005 for her efforts to prevent child marriage. The committee of NCW led by Dr. Girija Vyas, Chairperson, NCW, comprising Ms. Ansuiya Uike, Member, NCW and Ms. Relam Chauhan, Chairperson, Madhya

Pradesh State Commission for Women visited Indore on 13.5.2005 and met Ms. Shakuntala Verma at Gokuldas Hospital where she is being treated. They also met the officials from police, Women and Child Development Deptt., Education Department, apart from the collector and S.P. of Indore and collector and additional S.P. of Dhar.

The committee was perturbed by the lack of interest of the police and the local patwari in preventing child marriages. They did not accompany the victim during her visit when she tried to prevent child marriage. The Commission also expects the Chief Minister to take proactive interest in eradicating child marriages.

The Commission however, was happy to note that 8,000 to 10,000 marriages were prevented in Madhya Pradesh alone because of the massive campaign launched by the NCW from February onwards. The committee made the following recommendations:-

- The State Government of Madhya Pradesh and the local administration should provide adequate security to Ms. Verma and her family members.
- Action should be taken against the patwari.
- Police should arrest the accused as early as possible and stringent punishment should be given to him.
- Responsibility should be fixed on police officials and District Administration for their failure to prevent the crime.

The committee recommended grant of a suitable amount from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund to Ms. Verma.

The committee was, however, satisfied with the arrangements made for the treatment of the victim.

Rajasthan Plans Insurance Cover For Pregnant Women

Pregnant women in Rajasthan will soon get insurance cover for safe delivery of their children and proper rearing of infants during the first few months after birth. The State Government's health sub-centres will take full responsibility for providing medical assistance to women in the pregnancy period and carry out deliveries under the care of gynaecological and paediatric experts, in order to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates. This will provide much-needed support to women living in far-off regions.

While the State Government will bear a major portion of the insurance premium, the beneficiaries will be required to pay a small amount to get the facilities.

NCW Wants Bar Girls To Be Rehabilitated

The Chairperson of the National Commission for Women, Dr. Girija Vyas said that the girls rendered jobless by the closure of the dance bars in Maharashtra should be rehabilitated at the earliest and care should be taken to provide the affected women with alternative source of income. Many of them are not skilled in any other job.

She spoke to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Vilasrao Deshmukh in this regard, who has promised to take measures for rehabilitation of the affected girls.

An estimated 75,000 women had been rendered jobless in the wake of the crackdown on dance bars by the Maharashtra Government.

Many of the affected women had approached the NCW and had confessed that they had taken up the dance job as the last option.

Women's Political Empowerment Celebration

To commemorate the 11th Women's Political Empowerment Day, the Institute of Social Sciences (ISS) recently organized a seminar in New Delhi on "Panchayats and Child Rights : Birth Registration as the First Right to Identity", on 25th April, 2005, sponsored by Plan International (India).

Nearly 600 elected women representatives (EWR) from 320 gram panchayats in 18 States, including members of self-help groups, NGOs academics and representatives from Bangladesh attended the programme.

Welcoming delegates and guests,

Dr. George Mathew, Director, ISS, narrated the significance of these annual celebrations which the Institute has been organizing nationally ever since the 73rd Amendment became part of the Constitution.

Inaugurating this national event, Dr. Girija Vyas, Chairperson, National Commission for Women, highlighted the five pillars of women's empowerment : access to education, drinking water, healthcare, sanitation and employment. If these issues were addressed, the tide could turn in favour of equal rights for women and pave the way for their active role in governance, she said.



At the celebration on Women's Political Empowerment Day, Dr. Girija Vyas addressing the gathering. Sitting on the dias are Mr. Cecilio Adorna, Dr. George Mathew, Mr. Bruno Oudmayer, and Ms Bidyut Mohanty.



Dr. Girija Vyas presenting outstanding Women Panchayat Leader Award to Maina Devi. Mr. Cecilio Adorna and Dr. George Mathew look on.

P.K. Hota, Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, highlighted the importance of panchayats in preparing, implementing and monitoring health plans in accordance with the new National Rural Health Mission's objectives.

A galaxy of eminent speakers made important observations on different aspects of child rights including education of the girl child, health, child labour, child trafficking, and the need to reverse India's declining sex ratio which speaks of continuing gross gender discrimination.

Shri Mani Shankar Aiyar, Union Minister for Panchayati Raj, in his valedictory address, spoke about Rajiv Gandhi's five-point agenda to empower women and observed that the former Prime Minister had genuinely believed that reservation for women would reach 50 per cent on its own momentum.

Three elected women representatives were honoured with Outstanding Women Panchayat Leader Awards, 2005. The programme was coordinated by Ms Bidyut Mohanty, head, Women's Studies Unit, ISS.

NCW Team Visits Mumbai

An NCW team comprising Ms. Nafisa Hussain, Member (NCW), Ms. Sangeeta Dhingra Sehgal, District Judge, New Delhi, Ms. Aparna Bhatt, Director, Human Rights Law Network and Shri Yogesh Mehta, Law Officer, NCW, visited Mumbai to study the issue pertaining to the dance bar girls in the State of Maharashtra. The Committee also looked into and made recommendations with regard to the recent incident of rape of a girl by a policeman at Marine drive Chowki, Mumbai.

The committee also visited Nav Jyoti at Marol and met two minor girls, who had been working in the dance bar and were rescued and are being rehabilitated. Later, the committee held

informal meetings with police officials on the subject.

With regard to the alleged rape of a girl by a policeman at Marine Drive, the team met the victim and her family members at a confidential place arranged by the Mumbai police. After a detailed discussion with the victim and her family, the NCW team met senior police officials and the Commissioner of Police at his office and discussed the issue with them.

Indian Contingent in Islamabad

A contingent from India comprising Ms Kanti Singh, Minister of State, HRD, Dr. Girija Vyas, Chairperson NCW and Ms Reva Nayyar, Secretary Women and Child Department visited Islamabad in Pakiastan to attend the fifth South Asia Regional Ministerial Conference celebrating Beijing Plus Ten organised by the Govt. of Pakistan and UNIFEM.

The participants acknowledged positive developments in the following areas : ● The formulation of national policies and action plans to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women ● Increased access to education for women and girls ● Improved access to healthcare, water and sanitation for women and girls ● Strengthening of national machineries on women and institutional mechanisms towards effective

realization of women's human rights ● Drafting new legislations and/or amending laws especially on violence against women, sexual exploitation and trafficking of women and children ● Emerging and positive jurisprudence on women's rights ● Forging partnerships between Governments, women's groups, civil society and interest groups, elected representatives, the media and the private sector ● Strengthening women's access to economic opportunity, credit, and employment with dignity and personal security ● Enhanced affirmative actions towards increasing women's representation in political decision making at certain levels ● The adoption of policies on HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care ● Adoption of regional instruments such as SAARC Social Charter and the SAARC Convention on Trafficking.

The conference, however recognised gaps and challenges in some major areas : ● Inadequate progress in meeting the commitments under Article 9 of CEDAW on gender equality in citizenship laws. ● The feminization of poverty and its further accentuation due to adverse effects of globalization ● Continued prevalence of all forms of violence against women, including in conflict situations ● The increasing prevalence of HIV/AIDS particularly among women ● Lack



Ms Reva Nayyar, Dr. Girija Vyas and Ms Kanti Singh at the conference

IMPORTANT DECISIONS

Govt. job seekers should give dowry details : SC

To discourage acceptance of dowry, the Supreme Court has directed the Centre and the states to consider asking all their male employees about the quantum of dowry taken by them before joining service. If the governments accept the Supreme Court's proposal, then a candidate aspiring to become a government employee would have to provide information about the dowry taken by him and whether the same had been put in his wife's name as contemplated by Section 6 of the Dowry Prohibition Act. The Supreme Court directed all states to activate the Dowry Prohibition Officers as required under Section 8B of the Act with a view to eradicating the evil practice. The court also directed the Centre and the state governments to take steps for effective stepping up of anti-dowry literacy programme through Lok Adalats and the media.

Domicile key to divorce proceedings : HC

In a landmark judgment for couples married under the Hindu Marriage Act, the Bombay High Court recently held that if both the bride and groom were domiciled in India on the date of their marriage being solemnised in India, then even if they lived abroad for long stretches, the family court in India still has the jurisdiction to hear and decide a divorce plea filed by one of them.

A matrimonial dispute between a couple who resided in three different continents in their 15-year-old marriage has led to the HC laying down the law and legal principles for scores of other couples who marry in India under the Hindu Marriage Act and then live and work abroad. An Indian domicile is an essential condition for the Act to be applicable.

And what could only be good news for many marriages that take place in India and later start falling abroad, the judges held that "the system of law which governs a marriage should remain constant and cannot change with the whims of the parties to the marriage."

Women not to be arrested after sunset

The Rajya Sabha recently passed the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill 1994, effecting certain changes in the criminal justice system.

According to the Bill women would not be arrested after sunset or before sunrise barring exceptional circumstances.

Under exceptional circumstances, the police official would have to make a written report and obtain the permission of his superior officer for effecting such an arrest.

of gender sensitive policies and interventions to combat diseases like T>B, anaemia, malaria etc. ● Inadequate progress in achieving women's equal representation in national legislatures ● the lack of reproductive and sexual health information and services and care to women etc.

The conference prioritised its action plan on the following areas :
● Violence against women;
● Economic empowerment of women;
● Political empowerment of women;
● Disaster preparedness and management; and develop and strengthen insitutional mechanisms for gender equality.

Bal Vivah Virodh Abhiyan

On 19th April, NCW Chairperson, Dr. Girija Vyas alongwith Deputy Secretary, Ms. Gurpreet Deo, visited Lucknow in connection with Val Vivah Virodh Abhiyan. The Chairperson chaired a meeting attended by the officers of Women and Child Development, Health Department and Panchayati Raj. Some Distt. Collectors and SPs also attended the meeting. The Chairperson suggested setting up of Crime Against Women cell in each district and Women's Help Desk in each police station. She said that the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 which was old and outdated would be reviewed and amended by the Commission.

On 25th April, NCW Chairperson, Dr. Girija Vyas, Ms. Anusuiya Uike, Ms. Nafisa Hussain and the Joint Secretary, Ms. Nita Kapoor, visited Jaipur to attend review meetings, arranged by the Department of Women & Child Development, in connection with 'Bal Vivah Virodh Abhiyan' launched by the Commission.

On 6th May, the NCW team consisting of Members Nafisa Hussain, Anusuiya Uike and co-ordinator H.C. Bharti, visited Bhopal and attended review meetings, arranged by the Department of Women & Child Development, in connection with Bal Vivah Virodh Abhiyan launched by the Commission. On the same day, the NCW team held an investigation into a case of sexual exploitation of a dalit woman by a businessman. Ms. Anusuiya Uike also met officers of the MP State Commission for Women and discussed various issues related to women.

For further information visit our website at :

www.ncw.nic.in