



Editor's Column

While India has made rapid strides in many fronts, yet there has been conspicuous lack of progress as far as gender justice and equality are concerned. Two international studies released recently show that India is lagging far behind in ensuring gender equality.

According to the World Economic Forum's Corporate Gender Gap Report 2010, India has the lowest percentage of women employees, at 23 percent among 20 countries surveyed.

This is in comparison to the United States that has 52 percent, Spain with 48 percent, Canada with 46 percent and Finland at 44 percent. India is preceded by Japan (24 percent), Turkey (26 percent) and Austria (29 percent).

According to the WEF, this is "the first study to cover the world's largest employers in 20 countries and benchmark them against the gender equality policies that most companies should have in place but are, in fact, widely missing."

At the industry level, the survey reveals that the services sector employs the greatest percentage of women.

Within this sector, the financial services and insurance (with 60

percent), professional services (56 percent) and media and entertainment (42 percent) industries employ the highest percentage of women.

The sectors that employ the lowest percentage of women in the 20 economies are automotive (18 percent) and agriculture (21 percent).

The report felt that leading companies are failing to capitalise on the talent of women in the workforce.

India Scores Low on Gender Equality

The report also revealed that women employees tend to be concentrated in entry or middle level positions and remain scarce in senior management or Board positions in most countries and industries.

A major exception was Norway, where the percentage of women among Boards of Directors was above 40 percent. This was attributed to a Government regulation that mandates a minimum of 40 percent of each gender on the Boards of public companies.

The United Nations Development Programme sponsored 2010 Asia-Pacific Human Development Report estimated that the lack of women's participation in the workforce costs the Asia-Pacific region billions of dollars every year.

The report stated that in countries such as India, Indonesia and Malaysia, the GDP would increase by up to 2-4 percent annually, if women's employment rates were raised to 70 percent, closer to the rate of several developed countries.

In South Asian countries, such as India, fewer than 35 percent of women do paid work. Due to discrimination and neglect, women in the region suffer from some of the world's lowest rates of political representation, employment and property ownership.

Even UNDP report calls seat reservation for women a 'quick fix' solution to increase their representation but not a final tool of empowerment.

Once it is achieved, women can reasonably expect that besides holding up half the sky, they also control their destinies.

Regional Conference on Women's Rights

A regional conference on 'Women's Rights' was organised in Shillong by the National Commission for Women in collaboration with the State Social Welfare Department.

In his inaugural address, the Chief Minister Dr. D.D. Lapang highlighted the role of NCW which ensures that women's rights are protected and enhanced by reviewing existing laws relating to women and recommending new laws to protect them.

He expressed concern at the increase in the rise of abuse, molestation, trafficking for commercial sexual purposes etc.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Chief Minister Shri B.M. Lanong admitted that social problems existed concerning women's rights, especially, illiteracy, broken marriages, domestic violence, trafficking of women and children.

Earlier, Mr. S. Chatterjee, the then Member Secretary NCW said that the Commission had three basic functions - registering complaints of crimes against women, reviewing existing laws pertaining to women's issues and carrying out research activities.

NCW Member Wansuk Syiem said that though there had been concerted efforts by the NGOs and the civil society for the last decade to secure equal rights for women, who are wronged and oppressed, yet the overall



At the conference (from left) ADGP A.K. Mathur, Ms. Wansuk Syiem, Chief Minister Shri Dr. D.D. Lapang, Deputy Chief Minister Shri B.M. Lanong and former Member Secretary Shri S. Chatterjee.

status of women and their legal entitlements are abysmal. This is manifested in different forms of grave human rights violations such as domestic and sexual violence, sexual harassment at workplace, gender discrimination and sex-selective abortions, to name a few.

Thus, the aim of the consultation was to generate legal awareness among women, thereby equipping them with the knowledge of their legal rights and capacity to use these rights to get justice through fast-track courts and Parivarik Mahila Lok Adalats in different parts of North-Eastern States.

Nirupama Pathak case

NCW Chairperson Dr. Girija Vyas held a press briefing on the death of Nirupama Pathak, a Delhi based journalist from Koderma at the Conference Room of the Commission. Mr. Anand Pradhan, Faculty Member, Indian Institute for Mass Communication, alongwith some students handed over a memorandum to the Chairperson. Dr. Vyas said that she was shocked to hear about the incident and would call for a report from the Jharkhand Govt., within 24 hours and would also write to the Home Minister regarding this matter.

The students of IIMC also requested the Chairperson to

constitute a one-member enquiry committee to look into the matter. The Chairperson assured that she would

ensure justice to the victim and the case would be conducted in a fast track court.



Chairperson Dr. Girija Vyas at the press briefing

National Consultation on the Implementation of the PC & PNDT Act 1994

A National Consultation on the Implementation of the PC & PNDT Act 1994 was held on 10 April, 2010 at Udaipur, presided by Dr. Girija Vyas, Chairperson, National Commission for Women.

The consultation was attended by Government officials of the six districts of Udaipur, representatives of health services, police officials, academicians, activists, NGOs and media personnel. In her welcome address, the Chairperson expressed her deep concern over the declining sex ratio and missing girls and asked everyone present to take a pledge to prevent and prohibit female foeticide and infanticide. During the inaugural session, the speakers expressed their concern on the declining sex ratio and



At the consultation Dr. Girija Vyas, Ms. Ranjana Kumari, Ms. Yasmeen Abrar.

came up with some valuable suggestions to combat non implementation of the PC & PNDT Act

1994 and make it more effective.

The major recommendations based on the discussion include :

(1) NCW would create a PNDT Cell within its existing framework or as per a mandate. (2) There is a need to regulate indiscriminate supply/sale of ultrasound machines. (3) Authority under the act should be made functional. (4) There should be a provision for separate registration of sonography/imaging techniques like Amniocentesis and Chronic Villi Biopsy (CVB) as their requirements are totally different. (5) Penalties for offences should be made more stringent as it is 'murder in the womb'. (6) Registration of births and deaths to be made compulsory.



A view of the audience.

Clarification sought on representation of women in Hindi serial

The National Commission for Women has written to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting seeking a clarification from a private television channel on a Hindi serial *Na Aana Is Desh Mein Lado* that shows women in poor light.

The serial depicts women in a derogatory fashion and outrage the modesty of women which is likely to deprive, corrupt or injure the public morality and is thereby violative of the Indecent Representation of Women

(Prohibition) Act, 1986 as well as the Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, the NCW said.

The Commission strongly condemned the recently aired episodes of the serial where a woman is subjected to torture and coerced into sexual acts outside marriage.

The NCW Chairperson Dr. Girija Vyas said "This shocks the social and moral values of society and therefore, such episodes should not be telecast".

● **Punjab okays equal tenancy rights for daughters**

The Punjab Cabinet has decided to give equal tenancy rights to adult daughters by approving amendments in the Punjab Security of land Tenure Act, 1953 and Pepsu Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act, 1955.

Following the approval given by the Cabinet, adult daughters would now also be entitled for permissible area as it is allowed to adult sons of a landowner under the Punjab Land Reforms Act, 1972. Till now, upon the death of a tenant, only male descendents, the mother or widow were entitled to tenancy rights.

● **‘No corroboration needed in rape cases if victim is illiterate’**

The Supreme Court held that in case of rape, particularly if the victim is illiterate, her statement has to be accepted in *toto* without further corroboration for convicting the accused.

The Bench said, any statement of rape is an extremely humiliating experience for a woman, and until she is a victim of sex crime, she would not blame anyone but the real culprit.

“While appreciating the evidence of the prosecutrix, the courts must always keep in mind that no self-respecting woman would put her honour at stake by falsely alleging commission of rape on her, and, therefore, ordinarily a look for corroboration of her testimony is unnecessary and uncalled for”, the Bench added.

● **HC opens maintenance door to ‘second wife’**

The Bombay High Court has said that second wives could approach courts under the Domestic Violence Act. The judge asked a Nagpur based 45-year-old housewife, to move court under the 2005 law to seek maintenance, accommodation and other benefits from the man, who married her 27 years ago.

The court directed the husband to pay a compensation of Rs. 15,000 to the wife to cover her legal costs so that she could prosecute him under the Domestic Violence Act.

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● The Commission received a complaint from a woman, who had alleged that she was subjected to sexual harassment at workplace by her senior officer. When she complained about it to the HR Head, she was treated discriminately by the authorities due to which she thought of leaving the job. However, the company refused to return the original documents, even denied that they had the original documents of the complainant.

The Commission sent a notice to the HR Manager of the company asking him to appear before the Commission for a personal hearing.

The HR Manager deposed before the Commission and subsequently returned the original documents to the complainant. The Commission is now examining the complaint of sexual harassment and has directed the HR Manager to present an Action Taken Report with regard to the complaint of sexual harassment.

Stalked? Call up police helpline

If someone is stalking you, call the new anti-stalking helpline of Delhi Police. The police will take care of the “stalker” and one need not even register a case.

The helpline - 1096 and 27894455 - is especially for women harassed by stalkers.

Most of the time, women hesitate to walk into a police station and lodge a complaint. With this helpline, they just need to make a call and the rest will be taken care of by the police.

For now, the Crime branch of Delhi Police will take care of the anti-stalking cell but later on every police station will have such units.