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National Commission for Women Celebrates 25th Foundation Anniversary



Speaking at the 25th Foundation Anniversary programme of the National Commission for Women, **Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi, Hon'ble Minister of Women & Child Development**

congratulated all those who have been associated with the National

Commission for Women at different intervals of time. She emphasized that to promote gender justice, we need to urgently work for fulfilling and meeting the aspirations of women at different levels. She expressed concern about the condition of women in psychiatric homes and said we need to think how to rehabilitate such women. Another area of her concern was regarding women in prisons. She said the Ministry will be undertaking a study of prisons and prepare a manual on how women prisoners especially under trials who are treated like convicts should be treated in jail. She spoke about subordination of women in rural areas and said we must take steps to upgrade their status and to improve their quality of living. "We need to uplift women", she said, "teach them to understand finance, construction, how to make a road, bathroom, how to look after women in each village, how to prevent child marriages, and how to make sure girls are not smothered in wombs."

Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi said that the Commission should be able to look into each individual's problem and added that it has to acquire strength from case to case. She stated that every week it should be possible for the National and State Commissions to solve at least 15 cases with the support of the official machinery. She added that we have

to make the Commission stronger, tougher and capable of creating an environment where women are treated equally. She stated that the Commission can be successful only if all women act as partners.

The National Commission for Women on the occasion of its 25th year organised a day-long function on January 31, 2018 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. The function was divided into Inaugural, Breakaway and Plenary sessions. Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi, Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Women & Child Development was the Chief Guest in the Plenary session held in the afternoon.

The Hon'ble Minister of State in the Ministry of Women & Child Development, Shri Virendra Kumar was the Chief Guest in the Inaugural session. The Breakaway sessions were held on: Preventing Domestic Violence, Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace, Issues of NRI Marriages and Desertion, and Acid Attack & Rape (Survival Issues). Women from a cross section of society participated in these sessions.

As part of celebration, a photo exhibition was also organized at Vigyan Bhawan depicting the journey of the Commission since its inception in the year 1992. The exhibition showcased various activities that the Commission had performed over the years to improve the condition of women. Apart from this, the exhibition also showcased reports undertaken by the Commission. The Commission also brought out a Special Publication highlighting the journey of women empowerment across sections and classes. The publication was released by Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi.

The **Hon'ble Minister of State, Ministry of Women & Child Development, Shri Virendra Kumar** opined that "Contribution of women is significant in the Indian history. In a nation's progress, women play a crucial role. To enable elimination of poverty and inequality and ushering in economic, social and political progress of women, the Government is ready to do everything," assured the Minister. The Minister enumerated a number of activities where the Commission has been able to effect change in the lives of women.

Shri Rakesh Srivastava, Secretary Ministry of Women and Child Development said, "It is a matter of satisfaction that various measures taken by the Commission for gender mainstreaming are bearing fruit. He added that

recommendations of the Commission have found place in Law books. "The Commission has done a commendable work in areas of Research and Policy," added Srivastava.





BREAKAWAY SESSIONS ON 31-01-2018

➡ Preventing Domestic Violence

Points of Discussion : The moot point of discussion was what is the reason behind Domestic Violence and how can we stop it?

Panellists held the view that Domestic Violence is a reality for every married woman and because of patriarchal nature of society, the rights of women are compromised. We need to speak against it and, in this revolution, men will have to join in. They implored upon the audience that education can be the turning point against any kind of violence.

Takeaway : Domestic Violence is entrenched in our society. Women should not allow problems to perpetuate. They need to take small steps, to be eventually in-charge of decision-making.

➡ Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace

Points of Discussion : The focus was how to make the workplace safe, just and fair for women. Women also face victimisation and stigma. The Panel members opined that hiring should be based on competency and not on sex or religion. Also, a change in the work environment is necessary to give women their respectful place at work. The Panel concluded that harassment is not good for the mental and physical health of a woman.

Takeaway : A change can only occur by building self confidence, creation of self awareness and a system where women can go and complain. But the most urgent need is for women to find their voice. We need to think why

women do not speak up. Why do they think it is not worth the trouble? The spirit of the law too needs to be understood and acted upon.

➡ Issues of NRI Marriages and Desertion

Points of Discussion : Inadequacy of existing legal framework to handle the issue and need for separate Indian law and its applicability in foreign jurisdictions.

Takeaway : Panellists suggested a few measures such as: Registration of FIR under section 376 IPC for fraudulent NRI marriages; strengthening reciprocal arrangements and bilateral treaties for recognizing orders/ decrees of Indian courts, and foreign court decrees in India. Development of SoPs for impounding / revocation of passport of erring NRI grooms, including pending investigations.

➡ Acid Attack & Rape (Survival Issues)

Points of Discussion : Need for a uniform compensation and rehabilitation package all over the country and examining the efficacy of existing redressal mechanisms with a view to simplify the procedure.

Takeaway : Panellists strongly felt that a directive needs to be issued to Central and State Governments to ensure that hospitals provide treatment to victims at state expense. Also, corrective surgery should be undertaken by specialised hospitals at state expenses. The monitoring of trial and conviction of Acid attack cases needs to be done regularly. Merger of Sections 326A and 326B was also advocated.



Actor Divya Dutta at NCW's 25th Foundation Anniversary: "For those who do not get choices in life, all of us here should be the voice for those who cannot speak for themselves. The power of unity comes when women stand together for a cause."



Actor/singer Salma Agha at NCW's 25th Foundation Anniversary: "We are all lovers of women empowerment, humanity, peace and justice. There is a lot of unmatched enthusiasm, love, and respect for women in India."

↓ Seminar

Combating acid attacks in India: Socio-legal aspects

A National seminar on "Combating Acid Attacks in India: Socio-Legal Aspects" was organized by the National Commission for Women and the Faculty of Law, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, on January 24, 2018. The schema of discussions were structured in three technical sessions covering the broad themes of Psycho-Social Aspects of Acid Attacks, Existing Socio-Legal framework for Acid Attacks, and Combating Acid Attacks.

The findings and recommendations that emanated from the seminar are as under:

- ➡ Acid attack is a crime which needs to be made gender neutral as the number of men victims is slowly increasing.
- ➡ The easy availability of acid needs to be curbed, and inadequate deterrence addressed and the accessibility of rehabilitative facilities to the victims needs to be increased.
- ➡ Following the Apex Court's directions in Laxmi's case, the Central Government has issued guidelines to all States for regulating and monitoring the sale of acid. The panel members opined that while progress is visible, much more needs to be done.
- ➡ The Panel members opined that the deterrence in acid attacks can be ensured by tightening the existing legal provisions relating to punishment

for the offence. The act of throwing acid onto the body of another is wrought with the intention to disfigure, maim, torture, or kill. It was felt that the current segregation between Section 326A and 326B ought to be done away with by deeming all acid attacks or attempt to throw acid on equal footing. This would act as deterrence to potential acid throwers.

- ➡ Besides, the maximum punishment for acid attack deserves to be at par with that for rape/gang rape i.e. life imprisonment meaning imprisonment for the remainder of that person's natural life.
- ➡ There is a need for a time-bound proper investigation by the concerned police authorities and for filing of charge sheet in courts, as also timely disposal of cases by courts.
- ➡ Sensitization of police as to how to deal with cases of acid attacks is essential. Similarly, the courts need to dispose of acid attack cases in a time-bound manner. In case, special courts are required, these need to be sanctioned and set up.
- ➡ Payment of compensation should be as fast as possible.
- ➡ Despite directions of Hon'ble Supreme Court for private hospitals to provide treatment to acid attack victims, the reports indicate reluctance of private hospitals.

More Women in Higher Education

According to a survey conducted by the HRD Ministry, in institutes of Higher Studies, Gender gap has reduced by nine lakh during last five years, with girl students outnumbering men in eight disciplines in the 2016-17 academic session. It was found that in Master's of Arts, there are 160 women for every 100 men and the Bachelor's of Science (Nursing) has 384 women for every 100 men.

The enrolment by the end of 2016-17 academic year, stands at 3,57,05,905 with a Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of 25.2%. GER is counted from the number of students enrolled in higher educational institutions out of the total population in the age group of 18 to 23 years. India aims to attain a GER of 30% by 2020.

However, across 11 states, there are only 15 universities exclusively for women out of a total of 864 universities in India. ■

Territorial Army opens to women recruits

Women are now allowed to serve the Territorial Army. The Delhi High Court has lifted the 70-year-old bar on appointment of women in Territorial Army, quashing it on January 5, 2018.

The Delhi High Court set aside the Centre's advertisements that excluded women from being recruited. It ruled that these ads violated the fundamental rights.

A bench comprising of Acting Chief Justice Gita Mittal and Justice C Hari Shankar said that the restriction on enrolment of women contained in the advertisements was "neither reasonable nor rational and has to be quashed." Clarifying further, the bench said the term 'any person' mentioned in section 6 of the Territorial Army Act, 1948" includes both males as well as females." ■

SAI Centre in Kashmir to inspire young girls

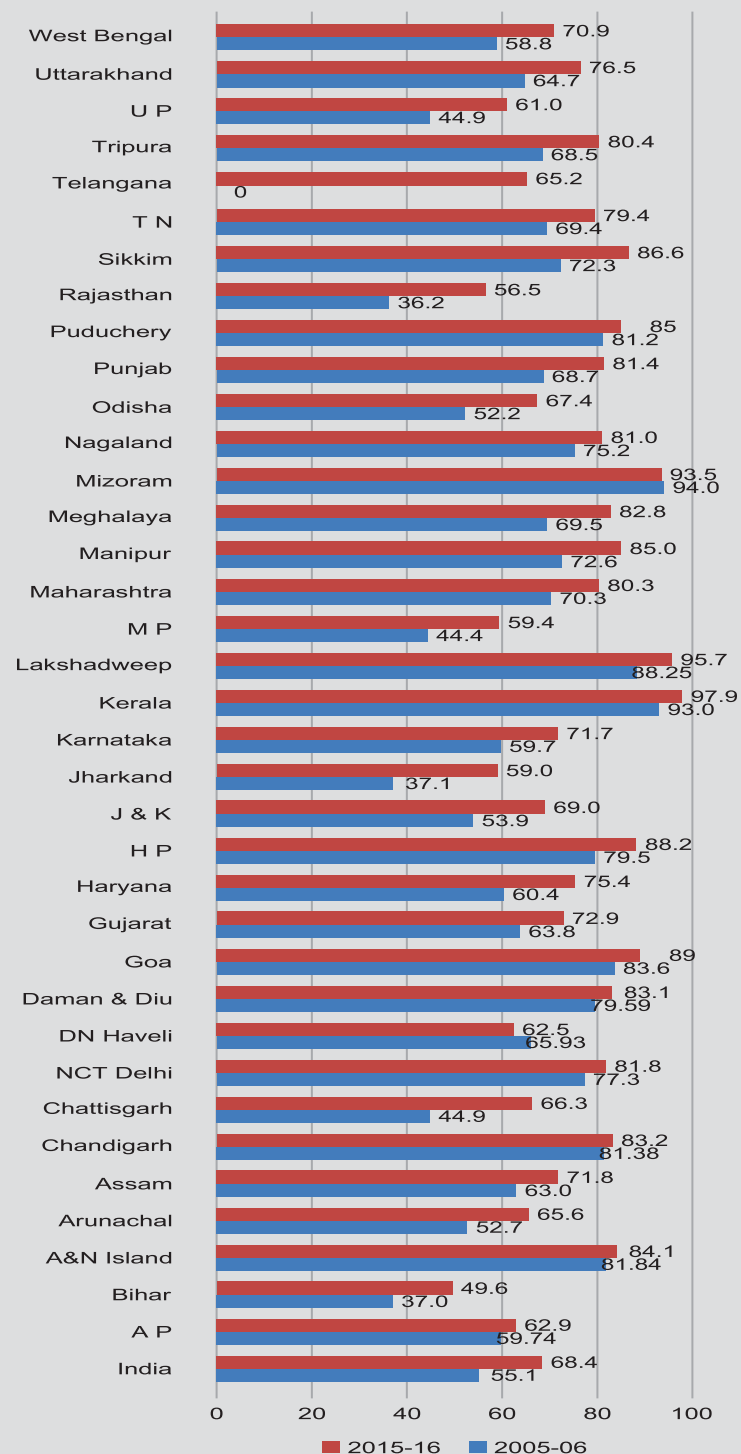
Afshan Ashiq, J&K women's football team captain, recently sought the central govt's assistance to develop the SAI centre in Kashmir to inspire young girls to take up sports. She met Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh to pursue the matter, following which the State government intervened and gave assurance to improve the sports infrastructure in the Valley to promote women's football.

The Ministry is planning a state-of-the-art sports training centre in Srinagar. The Centre will be run by Sports Authority of India (SAI) and is being planned with a budget outlay of Rs. 100 crores along the lines of Netaji Subhas National Institute of Sports (NSNIS) at Patiala. The training academy for athletes will be equipped with modern technology and will have provision for both indoor and outdoor sports activities.

The centre will impart training in Olympic and non-Olympic disciplines, and also appoint local coaches, who can spread the message of peace and sports among the Valley's youth. The Central govt has already sanctioned Rs 200 crore as a special package to develop sports infrastructure in the state. ■

Statistically speaking : Improvement in Female Literacy Rate

Women Literacy Rate shows impressive improvement in States where literacy rate for women was below 50 per cent. The improvement is an indicator of the changing scenario of gender equality in the country.



Source: Census of India 2011 and NFHS-4



'Kaushal Vikas Yojana' project in Bihar

Member, Sushma Sahu visited Patna, Bihar, to attend the launch of a "Special Project under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana – under the skill mission programme launched by the Prime Minister in July 2015. The aim of this project is to train persons to get better job opportunities.



The ceremony was organised by Dr. Prabhat Ranjan Diagnostic & Research Centre at Vidyapati, Bhawan, Patna, Bihar, on 28th January, 2018. The programme was inaugurated by the former Central Minister and MP Shri Rajiv Pratap Rudy in the presence of Shri Mangal Pandey Health Minister, Bihar, Disaster Management Minister Shri Dinesh Yadav, and Mayor Ms. Seeta Sahu, among other dignitaries.

Jan Sunwai in Delhi

- The National Commission for Women organized a "Mahila Jan Sunwai" in North West District, Delhi on January 16, 2018. Member Sushma Sahu along with NCW team attended the Sunwai organised in collaboration with the District Police and the District Legal Services Authority.
- Another 'Mahila Jan Sunwai' was organized by the National Commission for Women in Central District, Delhi on January 18, 2018. Member, Alok Rawat along with NCW team attended the Sunwai organised in collaboration with the District Police and the District Legal Services Authority.

From the C&I Cell

Complaint lodged in anger

It was a case where a complainant lodged a complaint via e-mail driven by anger and frustration. The complainant, a medical student at JIPMER (Puducherry), complained against another student of the same institution, levelling allegations of sexual harassment through cyber media, and being forced to indulge in unnatural sex by the accused. While the Commission had initiated action, the complainant sought to withdraw the complaint and did not want any action against the student about whom she had complained. She withdrew the complaint on the ground of it not being true. The Commission had started working on this complaint but the complainant apologised for the inconvenience caused to the Commission.

Programmes attended by Chairperson (I/c) Rekha Sharma

- In a briefing to the press at Shastri Bhawan on the "Condition of Women in Jails" organised jointly by the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the National Commission for Women on January 5, 2018, Chairperson (I/c) Ms. Rekha Sharma said that in order to improve the status and condition of women in jails, the Commission has prepared a comprehensive proforma which has been circulated to 144 Central jails across the country. The briefing was chaired by the Hon'ble Minister Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi.
- Chairperson (I/c) Ms. Rekha Sharma attended "Manavadhikar Utsav '18" in Shirdi, Maharashtra on January 8, 2018. The programme had been organised by the Human Rights Association of India in memory of its founder Raja Chandra Vanshi.



- Chairperson (I/c) Ms. Rekha Sharma flagged off a walkathon on January 27, 2018 along with the Minister of Women and Child Development, Haryana, Ms. Kavita Jain in Sonapat. The walk organised by the Haryana State Commission for Women was attended by over 300 women.



Status of Complaints received in the C&I Cell in January 2018

Month	Complaints Received	Complaints Closed (Old + New)
January 2018	1008	987