

1452

MINUTES OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE NATIONAL
COMMISSION FOR WOMEN HELD ON THE 6TH APRIL, 1993.

The Sixth Meeting of the National Commission for Women was held at New Delhi on April 6, 1993, under the Chairmanship of Ms. Jayanti Patnaik. The following were present:-

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Ms. Jayanti Patnaik | Chairperson |
| 2. Ms. Padma Seth | Member |
| 3. Ms. Ganga Potai | Member |
| 4. Ms. Monika Das | Member |
| 5. Ms. B. Senapati | Member |
| 6. Ms. Annie Prasad | Member Secretary |

Ms. Anna Malhotra, Hony. Adviser, attended the meeting as Special Invitee.

Shri K.K. Kirty, Deputy Secretary, Shri R.P. Madan, O.S.D. to Chairperson and the Consultants Shri B.K. Samaddar, Shri M.K.M. Kutty Shri K.M. Kamboj and Shri P.S. Ravindra were also present for rendering assistance.

After Chairperson's introductory remarks, the agenda items were taken up discussion.

Item No. 1: Confirmation of the Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the National Commission for Women held on 1.12.1993.

Smt. Padma Seth, Member, suggested that the names of the Advisers should not be mentioned in the minutes of the meeting as they were not supposed to participate in the meetings of the Commission. However, the views expressed by the Advisers could form part of the discussions in the meeting. The suggestion made by the Member was accepted. It was also decided that the minutes should also record in brief the discussions and not merely the decisions taken under each item ^{and} that the Member's dissent, if any, should be recorded. With these decisions, the minutes of the Fifth Meeting were confirmed.

143e

Item No. 2: Action taken on the decisions taken at the Fifth Meeting held on 1.12.1992.

(i) **Guardianship Laws and Custody and Maintenance:**

(BKS) M(PS) stated that the Expert Committee was engaged in examining the Dowry Prohibition Act, Sati Prevention Act and suggestions regarding the amendment of section 198 of the Code of Criminal Procedure in respect of Bigamous Marriages and after completing that work, the Committee would take up Guardianship Laws, etc.

(ii) **Study on the Impact of Economic Reforms on Women:**

As M(SA) was not present at the meeting, it was decided that the discussion on this item should be deferred for the next meeting.

(iii) **Publicity to NCW's Activities:**

(M) It was explained in the meeting that the Commission would take up a media blitz to highlight women's issues. As a first step, meetings of the NCW with the Chief Editors of the National Dailies in Delhi should be convened to impress on them the need to formulate editorial policy to focus public attention on women's issues. Apart from periodical editorials on women's issues, the newspapers should set apart space for writing leading articles/columns devoted to women's issues. It should be impressed on the Editors that they should have trained staff having the right approach to women's issues. The Pioneer and the Indian Express are already taking interest in depicting women's issues. The NCW should contact other newspapers for interaction with them. The Members could make it a point that while visiting various States they should have meetings with the Chief Editors of the regional and language newspapers to propagate women's issues and create social awareness and bring about attitudinal changes amongst the masses regarding women's issues. As regards AIR and Doordarshan, it was suggested that a National Policy for depicting women in favourable light, should be formulated.

141a

125

The Commission should try to get prime time for telecasting for this purpose. The NCW should assist in producing serials, skits, plays, etc. on women's issues to be telecast by Doordarshan and these should be got produced by well-known producers. The Commission should give financial assistance to young and competent producers to produce telefilms on some important topics such as "child marriage", "dowry problems" etc. Similarly, in the case of text books, the Commission should take the initiative in getting worthwhile and dedicated authors to write text books which convey right image regarding women. Another suggestion made in the meeting was that the Editors should be requested to send their staff correspondents periodically to the Commission for briefing. It was further suggested that the NCW should have a library of its own, preferably using the earlier room of the Chairperson on the second floor. The Commission should obtain newspapers having good circulation from all regions of the country. It was finally decided that the NCW should convene a meeting of the Chief/Resident Editors of the National Dailies in Delhi on the 29th April for the purposes discussed above.

(iv) Ms. Veena Verma's "The Married Women's (Protection of Rights) Bill":

The Commission noted that Ms. Veena Verma's comments on the opinions expressed by the Commission on the Bill had been received on the 27th March, 1993 and that a meeting of the Expert Committee of the Commission would be convened shortly to discuss the provisions of the Bill when Ms. Veena Verma, M.P. would also be present.

(v) Status Paper on Selected Topics:

(a) Status Paper on Education : The Commission took note of the paper giving the salient points of the status paper on education which was circulated in the fifth meeting.

129c

(b) The Questionnaire for Visits to States : The Commission suggested that a note on atrocities against women should be prepared by Shri Samaddar, Consultant, so that suitable items on the subject could be incorporated in the Questionnaire. It was proposed that data relating to "women in policy/decision-making levels" should also be obtained. It was also suggested that before a visit to any State was undertaken, all information available in Delhi in respect of that State should be culled out and on that basis, Questionnaire should be drawn up pinpointing the deficiencies. For instance, the information to be culled out could cover State laws for the protection of women's rights, crime trends etc., thus generating a broad perspective regarding the State to be visited. A Group within the Commission could make a study of the information collected. The Group should comprise Shri D.P.D. Choudhury and Ms. Widge, Consultants, who could meet every Friday for examining the information gathered from every State. It was decided that to begin with, a special analysis should be made for Andhra and North-Eastern States by the 3rd week of April, 1993. Visits to Andhra Pradesh from 10th May to 15th May and to the North-Eastern States in the 3rd week of April respectively should be organised. It was proposed that the Members would have meetings in the States at three different levels (i) Chief Minister/Ministers; (ii) Senior Officers; and (iii) NGOs.

(vi) Petition to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha about the sale of minor girls:

The Commission noted that Ms. Vasudha Dhagamwar, a Member of the Expert Committee on Existing Laws, had submitted a detailed paper on the subject. Shri P. M. Bakshi and Smt. Rama Devi, Advisers had earlier submitted their papers. The Expert Committee on Existing Laws will be meeting shortly to discuss the

natter. The date for the meeting will be fixed in consultation with Mr. Justice O. Chinappa Reddy, by the 15th of April.

Consultation with State Governments and Visit to States :

The position has been explained under item (v)(b) above.

(i) State level Commissions:

The Commission noted that a meeting with the Chairpersons and the Members of the State Governments of Maharashtra, West Bengal and Orissa would be held on the 16th April, 1993.

Judgement of the Metropolitan Magistrate in the case of Ms. Poonam Baluja:

The Commission noted that the case had gone to the High Court of Delhi and would come up for hearing soon.

Amendment of section 198, Cr.P.C.:

See item No. 5 below.

Baby Foods:

The Commission was informed that certain Voluntary Organisations were agitated as to why they were not consulted before the Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 1992, was passed. Chairperson desired that we should find out as to when the Bill was actually introduced, the exercise in this regard would have started even earlier to the inception of National Commission for Women. After a brief discussion, it was decided that UNICEF should be approached by the Commission to convene a meeting to discuss certain provisions of the Act with a view to suggesting amendments, if any, called for therein. The Commission and the national level women's voluntary organisations should also be associated with the meeting. It was also decided to have a meeting with Ms. Meena Swaminathan who had examined the matter in detail.

No. 3: Items suggested by M(MD) and M(SA).

Date and time of the next meeting of the Committee may be decided in this meeting of the Commission itself.

It was decided that the next meeting of the Commission would be held on June 10, 1993.

1350

(ii) Members should be assigned their home States. *This was*

ed. With reference to this suggestion, it was ^{also} decided that a monthly review of all the complaints should be conducted on the first Tuesday of every month.

Item No. 4: Proposal for setting up of Sub-Committees in four zones for collecting information regarding rape cases of minor girls all over the country.

At the outset M(MD) explained the need for collecting information regarding child rape from all parts of the country. She urged that the proposed sub-committees should be set up without delay. M(PS) suggested setting up a Committee which could visit each State to study cases of child rape. An Institution in Delhi, for instance MARG, might be chosen to assist in conducting the study. Chairperson suggested that action should first be taken on the recommendations made in the Seminar on "Child Rape" held in October, 1992, and thereafter the study of child rape cases all over the country might be considered. M(MD), however, desired that sub-committees should be set up in four zones of the country viz. North, South, East and West for collecting information regarding child rape cases with a view to focusing attention on all aspects of the problem, namely, social, economic, cultural, etc. Two lady social workers from each State would be co-opted with the four zonal sub-committees to be set up by the Commission. After collecting data/information from all four zones, an Expert Committee would be set up to make a detailed study of the data and give their findings. M(MD) finally suggested that 2 lady social workers preferably Ms. Asha Ramesh and Ms. Elizabeth from Delhi might be invited by the Chairperson for a discussion on the subject as early as possible. This was agreed to.

Item No. 5: Consideration of the report of the Expert Committee on Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 and Mrs. Roda Mistry's suggestion regarding amendment of section 198 of the Cr.P.C.

The Commission considered and approved the report submitted by the Expert Committee and decided that it should be forwarded to the Department of Women & Child

133 c

Development urgently for taking further necessary action in the matter.

Item No. 6: Proposal received from Deptt. of Women & Child Development for enactment of the Delhi Prohibition of Eve-teasing Bill, 1992.

The proposal was accepted by the Commission. A suggestion should be made to Government that the words "EVE-TEASING" should be replaced, as suggested by certain voluntary organisations, by more suitable words.

Item No. 7: New initiative by the Commission during 1993-94.

The Commission took note of the projects suggested under this item and gave its approval.

Item No. 8: Budget Estimates for 1993-94.

The Commission gave its approval of the Budget Estimates for 1993-94.

Item No. 9: Study of the Impact of Structural Adjustment Programme on Women: Report of the Research Assistants on the functioning of PDS.

As M(SA) was not present at the meeting, it was decided that the discussion on this item should be deferred for the next meeting.

Item No.10: Any other item with the permission of the Chairperson.

Annual Action Plan for 1993-94.

(i) Member (MD) indicated that as part of her Annual Action Plan for 1993-94, she would conduct investigation into two rape cases every month and take follow-up action with the agencies concerned. She would also visit two States in a month to study the living conditions of women engaged as labour in unorganised sector, etc. The Commission made note of these items of the Action Plan.

(ii) Member (PS) stated that to begin with her Action Plan would be to utilise the services of young activists groups, voluntary organisations, etc. as grass roots liaison. For this purpose, letter should be addressed to Directors of all the State Governments to furnish the lists of voluntary organisations. One or two district level women's organisations in each State should be created/organised by the NCW and these organisations can organise their own village/local units. These organised

132c

groups would act as ears and eyes of the Commission, who in turn, will offer them accreditation. Member (PS) suggested that in the first instance the existing voluntary organisations in each State should be identified and the information so gathered should be placed before the Commission. Each Member may visit the States allocated to them and create/organise district level women's organisations. Such local units may act as a potent force to combat social evils, investigate into cases and send its findings to the Commission. Workshops and Seminars may be organised through some of these organisations selected for the purpose with modest financial assistance from the Commission. Member (PS) suggested that the Commission should write to the Department of Women & Child Development regarding this item.

Member (PS) further stated that her Action Plan would cover awareness programme coupled with legal literacy and legal aid which can accelerate change amongst millions of women and men in the country. It was suggested that Shri B.K. Samaddar and his team would deal with this item.

In conclusion, Member (PS) stated that the Commission should urge the State and Central Governments to make available mobile health squads/vans for offering speedy and inexpensive medical service especially to poor women and girls. The Commission would also find ways and means to stop female infanticide and plan rehabilitation packages/strategies on long term basis. Member (PS) said that she would take up these items with the Health Ministry.

(iii) Member (GP) proposed to study the development of tribal women of Madhya Pradesh. In this connection, she proposed to visit tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh. Member (GP) also proposed to visit Jails/Nariniketans. Member (BS) will be visiting Nariniketans.

1280

(iv) **Studies on Harijan Women:** Member (BS) proposed to conduct studies on Harijan women as part of her Action Plan for 1993-94. The studies would focus on giving protection to Harijan women by way of technological support to relieve vocational strain, augment earning capacities by ensuring minimum wages, social inputs by way of education, health, recreation, etc. that could really bring a hopeful message of Harijan women. This would also include the monitoring of reservation quota of jobs and action to eliminate the scavenging jobs now being undertaken by Harijan women.

The Commission gave their approval of the Annual Plan of Action for 1993-94 as narrated above.

(v) **Investment of amount lying in the Contributory Provident Fund Ledger Accounts of Chairperson/Members of the Commission:** The Commission agreed to the proposal with the stipulation that the fixed deposit might be for a period of 46 days or more depending on the availability of funds and the requirements of the Commission.