

QUARTERLY

MINO-VIEW LAHORE

Voice of minorities and oppressed people in South Asian societies

UK Researchers Unravel Reasons Behind Indian's Farmer Suicides



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Equal Rights For All
in Nepal**

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Seeks Action Against Perpetrators**

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EDITORIAL

The year 2014 ended and the New Year is starting with new hopes and desires that the things will change and the circumstances will get better for the vulnerable section of the societies who suffered discriminations, injustices and unlawfulness in their life. Minorities, downtrodden and vulnerable population faced all these human rights violations in the ended year and there is no difference during the last quarter of 2014, their miseries continues as it would be part of their life for the generations. Farmers are one of the most vulnerable section of the rural population specially in South Asian region, as they get very little reward against their hard work and greatest responsibilities to feed the entire population of their countries. They belong to marginalized communities as they are not getting the benefit of economic activities and very few of them have access to the loan facility from the banking sector and rest of the community depend on private creditors for their farming needs and exploited with vary heavy interest against their borrowings. The current issue of Mino-View highlighted that Farmer suicides account for 11.2% of all suicides in India in 2012. Suicides among farmers in India began in the 1990s; particularly. The first state where suicides were reported was Maharashtra. The National Crime Records Bureau of India reported in its 2012 annual report that 135,445 people committed suicide in India, of which 13,754 were farmers. Farmer suicide is a matter of significant concern and controversy in India. In 2013 11,744 farmers ended their lives in India. British researchers have said they have found few of the main reasons behind India's farmer suicides. Investigations by researchers from the Cambridge University's Department of Sociology and University College London's Department of Political Science has found that rates of suicide are highest in areas with the most debt-ridden farmers who are clinging to tiny smallholdings - less than one hectare - and are trying to grow cash crops such as cotton and coffee that are highly susceptible to global price

fluctuations. Farmers at highest risk have three characteristics: those that grow cash crops such as coffee and cotton; those with 'marginal' farms of less than one hectare; and those with debts of Rs 300 or more. A large proportion of these rural inhabitants have not benefited from the economic growth of the past twenty years. In fact, liberalization has brought about a crisis in the agricultural sector that has pushed many small-scale cash crops farmers into debt and in some cases to suicide. In Sindh places of worship of the minorities were not protected and Hindu girls were being subjected to forced conversion. Government announce that Commission on minority rights to be set up. But Member of the National Assembly from Tharparkar, Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, also patron-in- chief of the Pakistan Hindu Council, has rejected the commission, terming it just eye wash and demanded that commission should also include representatives of all political and religious parties and legislators representing the minorities. The current issue of mino- view also includes Christian couple's murder, civil society seeks action against perpetrators in Pakistan, fight discrimination equal rights for all in Nepal, Dalit human rights defenders at high risk in India, U.N. Rights chief says Sri Lanka is obstructing war crimes inquiry, UN experts increase focus on caste discrimination and report on child slavery in Indian textile production. The present issue of Mino-View is a little attempt to promote justice and quality for the peace and stability of the region. It will act as a mirror reflecting the issues related to the identified minorities and other oppressed classes in the region. It will shed light on the darkest issues of our social system by voicing the concerns of minorities, Dalits and other oppressed sections of the SA societies. We will welcome feedback from our respected readers and concerned quarter. We invite social forces from all over the region to join hands for adopting a way towards egalitarianism.

EDITOR

Christian Couple's Murder: Civil Society Seeks Action against Perpetrators



Members of civil society and the Christian community gathered outside National Press Club in Islamabad on Wednesday 5th November to register their protest against murder of a Christian couple on Tuesday in Kot Radha Kishan near Lahore.

The participants were chanting slogans against the zealots and the government's apathy towards minorities, flashing placards towards indifferent bystanders that glided right past the protesters. They demanded justice for the victims' family and action against the perpetrators of the gruesome act. "It is not the first time we have been targeted.

We have seen several such incidents against minorities in the past," Interfaith League against Poverty (ILAP) Chairman Sajid Ishaq said. "We do not see any hope, even this time around," he added. Ishaq said that the incident was a test case for the governments

seriousness towards minorities' rights. The government must set up an independent judicial commission to probe the incident and make its findings public at the earliest, he demanded.

On the blasphemy law, Ishaq said, the problem was the mindset in society not the law. Clerics incite people and encourage them towards such acts, he said.

Pakistan Interfaith League Executive Director Nazia Ansari said criminals were getting away with such acts because of weak prosecution and enforcement of law. She said if we look at previous cases of similar nature, nothing has been done till date.

Human rights activist Farzana Bari said that violence against minorities were on the rise and people were now encouraged to commit such acts with impunity. She said parliament must review the blasphemy law as it is constantly misused.

"Once someone is even accused of blasphemy, they are doomed," she said. Special courts must be established to curtail such crimes. She said that due to an increase in such incidents, a large number of non-Muslim Pakistanis were migrating abroad. "The sense of insecurity is on the rise. Those left behind are the ones who cannot afford to leave," she said.

Separately, Father Emmanuel Yousaf and Cecil Shane Chaudhry of the National Commission for Justice and Peace said in a joint statement that increasing incidents of intolerance and violence against religious minorities speak volumes about the protection provided by the government to non-Muslim Pakistanis. Criticising the repeated failures, they demanded serious attention to the issue and said that because perpetrators of such incidents are never brought to justice due to lack of political will, minorities remain vulnerable as 'soft targets'.

According to findings of the European Organization on Pakistani Minorities released earlier this year, events of violence against minorities in terms of target killings, sectarian killings, torching of holy books and temples, rape, murder, forced conversion and abductions have affected up to 45 Hindus, 21 Sikhs, 66 Christians and 13 others.

Source: Express Tribune

UK Researchers Unravel Reasons Behind India's Farmer Suicides



India is an agrarian country with around 60% of its people depending directly or indirectly upon agriculture. Farmer suicides account for 11.2% of all suicides in India in 2012. Significant reporting on suicides among farmers in India began in the 1990s, particularly by the Rural Affairs Editor of *The Hindu*, P. Sainath. The first state where suicides were reported was Maharashtra. The National Crime Records Bureau of India reported in its 2012 annual report that 135,445 people committed suicide in India, of which 13,754 were farmers (11.2%).¹ Of these, 5 out of 29 states accounted for 10,486 farmers suicides (76%) – Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala. In 2011, a total of 135,585 people committed suicide, of which 14,207 were farmers. In 2010, 15,963 farmers in India committed suicide, while total suicides were 134,599. In 2012, the state

of Maharashtra, with 3,786 farmers' suicides accounted for about a quarter of the all-India total. In 2013 11,744 farmers ended their lives in India. Farmers suicides is a matter of significant concern and controversy in India. Some allege the beginning of the increase in farmer suicides to the early 1990s. It was also claimed, that while a comprehensive all-India study is still awaited, that most farmers suicides occurred in states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala and Punjab.

In the beginning it was believed that most of the suicides were happening among the cotton growers, especially those from Vidarbha. A look at the figures given out by the State Crime Records Bureau, however, was sufficient to indicate that it was not just the cotton farmer but farmers as a professional

category were suffering, irrespective of their holding size. Moreover, it was not just

the farmers from Vidarbha but all over Maharashtra who showed a significantly high suicide rate.

British researchers have said they have found few of the main reasons behind India's farmer suicides.

Investigations by researchers from the Cambridge University's Department of Sociology and University College London's Department of Political Science has found that

rates of suicide are highest in areas with the most debt-ridden farmers who are clinging to tiny smallholdings – less than one hectare – and are trying to grow cash crops such as cotton and coffee that are highly susceptible to global price fluctuations.

Farmers at highest risk have three characteristics: those that grow cash crops such as coffee and

cotton; those with 'marginal' farms of less than one hectare;

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and those with debts of Rs 300 or more. States in which these characteristics are most prevalent had the highest suicide rates. These characteristics accounted for almost 75% of the variability in state-level suicides.

The researchers said their study points to a vicious cycle of Indian smallholders forced into debt due to market fluctuations. The research supports a range of previous case studies that point to a crisis in key areas of India's agriculture sector following the liberalization of the nation's economy during the 1990s. Researchers said that policy intervention to stabilize the price of cash crops and relieve indebted farmers may help stem the tide of suicide that has swept the Indian countryside. This latest work follows on from a recent Lancet study by researchers from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine which showed Indian suicide rates to be among the highest in the world - with suicide the second leading cause of death among young adults in India.

"Many believe that the opening of markets and scaling back of state support following the liberalization of the Indian economy led to an 'agrarian crisis' in rural India - which has resulted in these shocking numbers of suicide among Indian agricultural workers," said lead author Jonathan Kennedy. "Small scale farmers who cultivate capital-intensive cash crops - which are subject to massive price fluctuations - are particularly vulnerable to accruing debts they can't repay. Many male farmers - who are traditionally responsible for a household's economic well-being - resort to suicide because they can't support their families," Kennedy added. The researchers found that suicide rates tend to be higher in states with greater economic disparity but inequality as a predictor of suicide rates paled in comparison with cash crops and marginalized, indebted farmers. A case in point is Kerala one of the most developed in India - has the highest male suicide rate in India. If Kerala were a country, it would have the highest suicide rate in the world. Areas such as Gujarat where cash crops are mainly cultivated on large-scale farms have low suicide rates. This is because wealthy cash crop farmers have the resources to weather difficult economic periods,

without falling into debt and ruin. Another outlier is West Bengal which has high numbers of smallholders but an average suicide rate. But this was because the CPM - who have an "unrivalled commitment" to improving the condition of poor farmers - had a strong political influence over the past four decades, they said. "The liberalization of the Indian economy is most often associated with near-double digit growth, the rise of India as an economic powerhouse and the emergence of wealthy urban middle classes. But it is often forgotten that over 833 million people - almost 70% of the Indian population - still live in rural areas," Kennedy said. "A large proportion of these rural inhabitants have not benefited from the economic growth of the past twenty years. In fact, liberalization has brought about a crisis in the agricultural sector that has pushed many small-scale cash crops farmers into debt and in some cases to suicide," he added. Researchers analyzed suicide figures of 18 states as well as national crime with census statistics and surveying done by the ministry of agriculture to create data models that investigated whether case studies of "farmer suicide" that concentrate on a few suicide hotspots could be generalized across India.

Source: *The National Crime Records Bureau of India and Two circle .net*

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UN Experts Increase Focus on Caste Discrimination



In a recent Geneva meeting of UN Special Rapporteurs and civil society, caste-based discrimination was highlighted by the Rapporteurs as a key cross-cutting issue of concern. A team from IDSN were present at the meeting and raised the issue of caste-based discrimination, to which there was a significant response and engagement from the Special Rapporteurs.

Significant proposals for initiatives brought up by the Special Rapporteurs at the exchange of views meeting, included, moving towards a more structured mechanism against caste-based discrimination for the next annual meeting in 2015, placing caste-based discrimination and slavery on the agenda of next years annual meeting or having

a consultation on caste-based discrimination, and working on caste-based discrimination across mandates as a concerted effort.

The Special Rapporteurs thanked IDSN for continuing to bring this issue to their attention and came with committed statements. The Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Ms. Rita Izsak said,

“We have been discussing how to jointly move towards a more structured mechanism against caste-based discrimination for the next annual meeting (2015) and to see how we can move together in more concerted and coordinated effort for these 260 million people ... we will work for this and assure that we are committed.”

While the The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its

causes and consequences Ms. Urmila Bhoola, furthered this commitment stating that,

“I would like to thank IDSN in particular for raising the issue of caste-based discrimination and its persistence and clear norms for caste-based discrimination as a human rights violation. My mandate is indebted to IDSN for raising the issue of caste-based discrimination in the form of caste-based slavery and manual labour and manual scavenging and the persistence of forced and bonded labour particularly among Dalit people. I am interested in conducting missions and writing a report on caste-based discrimination – because it raises a number of issues. I also want to call for caste-based discrimination and slavery to be placed on the agenda of next year's annual meeting or even have a consultation to ensure that it remains to be seen as a continued pernicious issue.”



Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Ms. Rita Izsak said

The Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context,

Ms Leilani Farheed said she was committed to working with other mandate holders, also on the issue of caste-based discrimination. The Special Rapporteurs on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, Mr. Darius Puras, and the Special Rapporteur on the



Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst

situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst, brought up keeping a focus on caste-based discrimination in their work.



UN Special Rapporteurs

Ms. Frances Raday, Chair of the UN Human Rights Council Working Group on Discrimination against Women also commented that,

“We have worked on caste-based discrimination, we have been in contact with Dalit women associations and worked on the horrors of sexual violence on basis of caste-based discrimination.”

The Special Rapporteurs are stepping up the cross-mandate coordination of the engagement

with caste-based discrimination following years of references to caste-based discrimination being made in key reports and dialogues from 17 Special Procedures mandate holders.

Previously seven key Special Rapporteurs released a joint statement on caste-based discrimination and the commitment to fighting caste-based discrimination voiced at the meeting also follows on from this statement.

Source: IDSN

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Seminar on Housing and Land Rights: Accessibility and Realities of Dalits in Bangladesh



The constitution of Bangladesh has secured equal rights, status and opportunities towards all its citizens. However, around 6.5 million of Dalits are deprived of all these constitutional commitments. Most of the Dalits are landless and homeless, untouched by the so-called upper class. Their shabby and dilapidated housing generate a picture of different world detached from the mainstream society. The Dalit community is bound to reside for years at the colony built in the underdeveloped government's khash land in the villages and towns.

Under these circumstances Nagorik Uddyog and Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM) jointly organized a seminar on

‘Housing and Land Rights: Accessibility and Realities of Dalits in Bangladesh’ at CIRDAP Auditorium on 20 October, 2014. The overall objective of the seminar was to share the housing and land rights situation of the Dalit community and find out way forward for improvement. A total of 119 participants from Civil Society Organizations, Human Rights Organization, Dalit community people, including guests attended the seminar.

Ms. Nur Jahan Begum MP, member, Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Housing and Public Works, was present as the chief guest in the seminar. Special guests and discussants in the seminar were eminent

researcher and Dalit rights activist Professor Mesbah Kamal, Department of History, University of Dhaka; Mr. Shamsul Huda, Executive Director, Association of Land Reforms and Development (ALRD), Mr. John A. Armstrong, National Director, Habitat for Humanity Bangladesh; Mr. Rabindranath Soren, President, Jatiyo Adibasi Parishad (National Council for Indigenous People); Moni Rani Das, President, Dalit Women Forum and Mukul Shikder, Advisor, BDERM. The seminar was chaired by Mr. Sunil Kumar Mridha, President, BEDRM and moderated by Mr. Zakir Hossain, Chief Executive of Nagorik Uddyog. A keynote paper was presented by Mr. Istiaque Mahmud, Research & Documentation Officer, Nagorik Uddyog.

Mr. John A. Armstrong, National Director of Habitat for humanity said that the Dalit need special facilities in Bangladesh as their housing situation is extremely vulnerable. He said that leaving this huge population underdeveloped, the target for sustainable development could not be achieved. He also mentioned that Habitat for Humanity is working for the *Rishi* community. He expressed interest to work in collaboration with BDERM and Nagorik

Uddyog for the development of housing situation of Dalit community in future.

Professor Mesbah Kamal said that the housing and land opportunities allotted to the Dalit communities is insufficient and other privileges like water, sanitation was so inadequate that can be termed as beyond of the humanity. He demanded immediate action by the government to ensure dignified housing facilities for them. He also demanded to give priority to the Dalit community in the project of housing for the middle class and poor in the rural areas as committed by the Prime Minister.

Dalit had gained momentum in recent years and government had taken various initiatives for their development. But the Dalits will have to fight until they get the same privilege like the mainstream society as per the constitutional rights.

President of Dalit Women Forum, Ms. **Moni Rani Das** said 'this is the time to be united and raise collective voice for housing and land rights of Dalits.' She gave emphasis on political participation of Dalits and identified this as one of the main weapon against any discrimination.

Committee on the Ministry of Housing and Public Works. She assured that during the tenure of the present government the housing and land rights of the Dalit would be ensured within the capacity of the government.

The major recommendations made in the seminar

☐ Conduct physical survey on the housing and land situation of the Dalit community and take practical and special steps including adequate budget allotment for removing housing problem of the Dalit.

☐ Ensure permanent housing of the Dalit community; allot existing land to the Dalit community where they have been living for generation. Stop eviction by the land grabber, influential people, bring them under law and ensure exemplary punishment.

☐ Proper monitoring by the govt. to ensure that the allocated budget for housing of Dalits is being used properly.

☐ Ensure adequate rooms for the families in the Dalit colonies, construction of new buildings, deliver in time, maintain quality, ensure hygienic toilet and drainage system.

☐ Conduct massive awareness campaign to change the mindset of the mainstream people towards the Dalit, ensure acceptance of them in the mainstream society (in terms of buying land, renting house etc.)

Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM)

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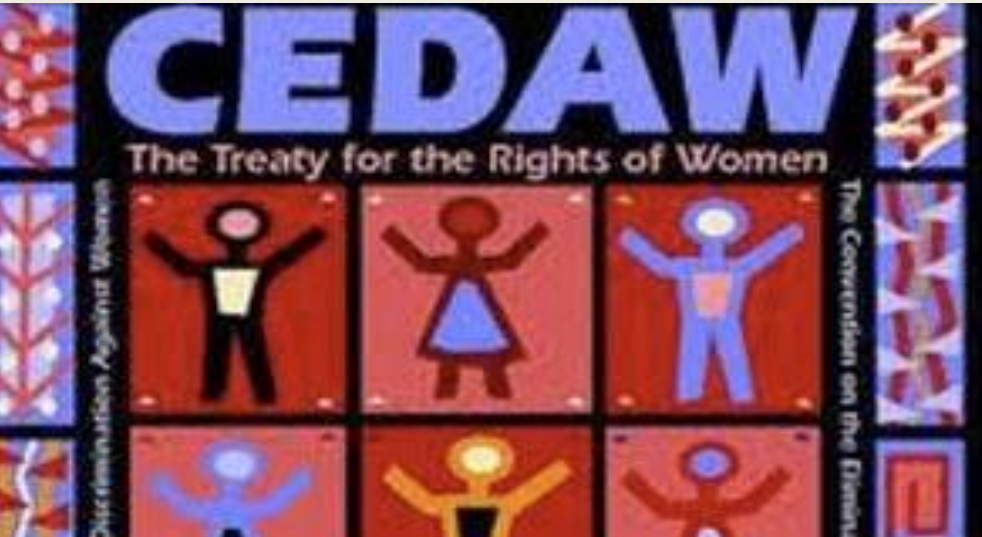


Mr. Shamsul Huda, Executive Direction of Association for Land Reforms and Development (ALRD) said that government should allot *khas* land to the Dalit community on priority basis. He wished that non-government organizations would come forward to support Dalit community in land development or decent housing.

Zakir Hossain, Chief Executive of Nagorik Uddyog said that movement for the rights of the

The chief guest, **Ms. Nurjahan Begum MP**, mentioned that the present government had taken a lot initiative for the development of the Dalit community. She highlighted that, in fiscal year 2014-15 the government allocated BDT 50 crore for the housing of Dalits. However, she agreed that the community needs lot of supports in terms of housing and land rights and being a member, she would raise the issue in the meeting of the Parliamentary Standing

Dalit Human Rights Defenders at High Risk in India



Dalit human rights defenders promote the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of Dalits, as they are often violated. They are at high risk of physical assaults and other reprisals in caste-affected countries. These are among others inter alia, death threats, beatings and caste-based insults in public places, direct and indirect destruction of their property/belongings; and filing of false cases against them. For instance, Dalit human rights defenders sometimes feel so pressured by fear of intimidation and/or reprisals from the dominant caste that they leave their job. Another example, which has been documented by the Asian Legal Resource Centre, is that Dalit human rights defenders have experienced that their complaints were not taken up and instead they were charged in false cases i. The number of cases registered across India for

offenses which are punishable under the national law, the Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribe Act, is therefore relatively low. These assaults are a widespread problem throughout India, but the risks and violations also persist in other countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Yemen.

Dalit women's defenders

Dalit women are at high risk of violence and inhuman treatment, such as sexual assault, rape, and naked parading. The insults serve as a social mechanism to maintain Dalit women's subordinate position in society, and are furthermore a way of humiliating entire Dalit communities. Police personnel often neglect or deny the Dalit women's defenders of their right to seek legal and judicial aid. In many cases, the judiciary

fails to enforce the laws that protect Dalit women from discrimination. Dalit women's defenders tell of police officers refusing to intervene or to even take their statements. In many cases, the judiciary fails to enforce the laws that protect Dalit women from discrimination. As noted in a recent study on 'Gender Violence and Access to Justice for Dalit Women' by Navsarjan Trust and Minority Rights Group International, Dalit women face severe difficulties in accessing justice and are extremely vulnerable to violence, sexual abuse and other atrocities

In 2009, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women reported an overwhelming number of cases of Dalit women in India being raped and beaten by higher castes, when attending their daily doings. Almost all cases show that the Dalit women are punished by police officers when trying to file a complaint or threatened to remain silent, also by means of physical assaults and rape and threats of further recourses. The perpetrators are usually released on bail without arrest, police investigation or prosecution. Also in 2014, the UN Special Rapporteur has reported on violence against Dalit women and allegations of de facto caste-based discrimination, perpetrated by police officers, public representatives and community members. "the low rate of

prosecution and conviction for acts of violence against women contributes to the lack of effective redress provided to victims". The Special Rapporteur, in particular, reported on the widespread trafficking of women and girls, mainly from scheduled castes, to and from India. "Women who are trafficked and forced into prostitution are left unable to defend their rights, and lack access to rehabilitation and compensation for such crimes"

The CEDAW committee has similar expressed concern about the atrocities committed against Dalit women and the culture of impunity for perpetrators of such atrocities in India. An example from 2010 is of an elected female Dalit representative in Rajasthan who was beaten up by members of the dominant caste because she was working with cases focusing on land rights. She filed a complaint to the police, who Dalit women demonstrate during the National Conference of Dalit Women in May 2011. The women requested the government to make special provisions for them in the new constitution. Photo: FEDO/IDSN never arrested the perpetrators. Moreover, in the Universal Periodic Review of India in 2012, states made recommendations to protect human rights defenders working on the rights of scheduled castes



The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mrs. Margaret Sekaggya, visited India from 10 to 21 January 2011. In a mission report following her visit, the Rapporteur raised particular concern for the situation of Dalit human rights defenders. While congratulating the Government of India on the comprehensive and progressive legal framework, which guarantees human rights and fundamental freedoms, the Special Rapporteur noted widespread deficiencies in their full implementation at both central and state levels, adversely affecting the work and safety of human rights defenders. The Rapporteur expressed particular concern "at the plight of human rights defenders working for the rights of marginalized people, i.e. Dalits, Adivasis (tribals), religious minorities and sexual minorities, who face particular risks and ostracism because of their activities. Collectivities striving for their rights have in fact been victimized".

Recommendations

The Rapporteur expressed that in order to overcome these challenges the laws, which already are in place, need to be fully implemented, and stressed that the responsibility lies on the Governments. "Defenders

face multiple challenges and dangers in their daily work and the State has the responsibility to protect them. Government authorities, including security forces,



UN Special Rapporteur Mrs. Margaret Sekaggya

and the judiciary and human rights commissions, at the central and state levels, need to do much more to ensure a safe and conducive environment for defenders. The Rapporteur notes that a high priority is full accountability for violations against the human rights defenders and that the perpetrators have to be prosecuted. In line with the Rapporteur, IDSN recommends that the Government must undertake an impartial investigation of the crimes committed against human rights defenders.

EU's Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders

The objective of the guidelines is to promote and encourage respect for human rights defenders. The Union can use the guidelines to intervene in cases where Human Rights Defenders are at risk. They assist EU Mission

Fight Discrimination- Equal Rights for All in Nepal



In the past year, Village Development Foundation (VDF), GHRD's partner organization from Nepal, has taken tremendous steps to achieve inequality and justice in two vulnerable districts of Nepal. The goal of "Fight Discrimination, Equal Rights for All" was to address the discriminatory problems faced by the Dalit, economically underprivileged people, women and children; issues that are also apparent in Millennium Development Goals.

Even though Dhanusha and Mahottari district are accessible and have good linkages with economic centres, the human development index is quite low because of the discrimination based on caste, class and gender. Such discrimination and inequalities were hindering access to participation and decision making as well as inclusion of the poor, Dalits, women and children in the development process. Gender based violence, social violence,

dowry system and early marriages were very common.

Over the course of the year the project has helped to empower the poor and minorities to claim their rights, and to stop child marriage and untouchability practices through a human rights awareness programme and legal literacy training. VDF inspired more than hundred committed members of the communities to help these vital causes. By providing literacy training to these social advocates VDF formed watch groups- social policies of the communities. VDF was able to create six watch groups within six villages of these districts. The perseverance of the watch groups, the willingness of the residents and the work of VDF has resulted in a greater understanding of minority, child and gender-based rights and violations of these rights within the community; this has led to drastic changes. Through the assistance of the watch groups hundred children were saved

from the brutality of child marriage. Within these communities there has also been an extreme drop in social violence, gender based violence and caste based discrimination; these crimes have been reduced by 80%. Not only are people aware of such acts being a crime and have come to realise their rights, but VDF also included local politicians as a part of their aim to bring equality in these communities. They have not only provided training of inclusive participation to the people but they have included political figures of the community as a part of the trainings. They have organized dialogues between local politicians and the people. Thus, influential people of the communities have also become social advocates for equality and the fight against discrimination. The marginalized population of the project areas are more capable of participating in the decision making process and the politicians are more willing to allow inclusion. While there is much more to be done, people are being heard and within a year VDF has been useful in opening the eyes of the community.

While "Equal Rights for All" is a long term universal goal, VDF has already come a long way to achieve this goal in their project areas. A small step goes a long way -the work achieved by VDF is a victory in the fight towards equality.

Source: global Human Rights Defender

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DALIT WATCH

Skew in Dalit Jail Inmate Ratio: NCRB

Maharashtra

03 Nov 2014



MUMBAI: The percentage of Dalit inmates in jails across India is disproportionately higher than their collective population, according to the Prison Statistics

India 2013 released by the National Crime Records Bureau last week.

While SC/STs constitute 25.2 per cent of Indian population as per Census 2011, their proportion among the roughly 4.2 lakh prisoners in Indian jails is considerably high at 33.2 per cent. The trend is similar among all types of prisoners like convicts, under-trials and detainees. Sociologists and Dalit activists have attributed this to political exploitation and prejudicial attitude of the police towards members of the SC/ST communities.

Data show that Rajasthan jails house the largest chunk of Dalit inmates followed by Gujarat.

While 45.8 per cent of the prisoners are SC/STs in Rajasthan, in Gujarat they constitute 43.6 per cent. Other major states that have reported considerably high difference between percentage of SC/ST population and

prisoners are Assam, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.

While the percent of SC/ST population in Tamil Nadu is 21.2, the percentage of SC/ST prisoners in the state is 38.4 – a difference of 17.3 per cent. Compared to 2001, when 39 per cent of prisoners belonged to SC/ST, the numbers now seem better. But Gujarat, Rajasthan, Assam and Kerala are also among the states that have bucked the trend of decreasing proportion of SC/ST prisoners over the decade.

While the percentage of SC/ST population in Gujarat went down by 0.4 since 2001, percentage of SC/ST prisoners went up by 5.5 from 38.2 to 43.6 per cent.

Source: The New Indian Express

Parties confine SC candidates to reserved seats

New Delhi

23rd November



Political parties continue to limit the participation of tribal and Dalit leaders to reserved constituencies

only. Between the Congress and the BJP, the two major national parties gave ticket to only three Scheduled Caste candidates in the 'general' category in the

2014 Lok Sabha election, *The Hindu's* analysis of data shows.

While only SCs and STs can contest the 84 and 47 seats reserved for them respectively, there is no bar on who can contest the 412 'general' seats in the country. In fact, both the Constituent Assembly debates and the deliberations of the Delimitation Commission in 2008 state clearly that the expectation was not that political parties would restrict SC and ST leaders to reserved constituencies only.

Yet, in practice that is exactly what is happening. Of the 6,711 candidates who contested the 412 'general' seats in the 2014 polls, 1,027 were Scheduled Caste, as per their affidavits submitted to the Election Commission. These SC candidates are, however, overwhelmingly Independents, less than half belonged to political parties.

Among political parties, the BSP leads the way, having given tickets to 134 SC candidates to contest in 'general' seats. However, in U.P., the only State in which the party was truly in the reckoning, it gave ticket along caste lines and not a single SC candidate got a ticket in the 'general' seat. "The BSP post-2009 is primarily a U.P.-based party and its pocket of influence outside the State is very limited," Rahul Verma, a political scientist with the Travers Department of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley, explained in an email. "There might be a

symbolic value attached to nominating SC candidates in general constituencies, however, the value of seeking a BSP nomination outside U.P. is very low and the SCs getting the BSP nomination in general constituencies is largely a function of the BSP's limited presence," he said.

As in previous years, T.N. continues to lead among the States, with a fifth of all candidates in general seats being SC candidates, but neither of the two Dravidian parties nominated a single SC candidate in a general seat. The 2014 participation of SC candidates in reserved seats in T.N., moreover, is lower than it was in 2009.

Just 168 ST candidates contested in 'general' seats, nearly half of them Independents. Both major parties said while diversity was an important consideration, "winnability" was the basis on which tickets were given.

Source: The Hindu

Half of school dropouts in K'taka are dalits

Karnataka

5th December 2014



Bengaluru: Nearly half of the school dropouts in the primary section happen to be dalits. Figures show that as many as 1.38 lakh dalit children

dropped out of school within two years of their enrolment as against a total of 2.9 lakh

dropouts. In other words, 48% of dropouts are from dalit communities.

This alarming revelation came from a report by The IndiaGoverns Research Institute based on government figures here on Thursday. The figure pertained to primary school section, from classes 1 to 5, and the period between 2012 and 2014.

After sourcing data from the District Information System for Education, the institute segregated it at assembly constituency levels. The report said in 2011-12, there were 14.97 lakh dalit children studying in classes 1 to 5 in the state. In the next two years, by 2013-14, 1,38,864 children had dropped out. In the case of children from other communities, out of 38.6 lakh students, 1.52 lakh had stopped coming to school. Interestingly, the top-10 constituencies where most number of dalit students left school are reserved constituencies (represented by dalit MLAs). And all the 10 constituencies --- Indi, Humnabad, Yelburga, Chincholi, Chittapur, Shorapur, Devadurga, Bhalki, Basavakalyan and Hadagali - are located in north Karnataka region. "Backwardness of the north Karnataka region, poverty and migration for employment contribute to the higher dropout rate among dalits," said sociologist Prof GK Karanth.

Veena Ramanna of IndiaGoverns Research Institute said much needs to be done. "Despite the present government's focus on this (dalit) section, the problem has not been solved. It indicates a

lot and calls for urgent intervention," she said.

DROPOUT RATE 6.99%

The dropout rate in government schools is 6.99%, much higher than private schools at 3.2%. In 2011-12, there were 30.33 lakh children in classes 1 to 5 in government schools. By 2013-14, they had reduced to 28.21 lakh, a decrease of 2.12 lakh. During the same period, 23.17 lakh children in private schools had reduced to 22.43 lakh, a decrease of 74,198 (3.2%). The trend is the highest in north Karnataka region, with nine constituencies figuring in top-10 constituencies with most number of children leaving the school system. Shanthinagar in Bengaluru ranks fifth in the dropout rate. Out of 224 MLA constituencies, more than 1,000 children have dropped out in 113 constituencies.

GIRL ENROLMENT LOWER

The enrolment of girl children continues to be low. Last year (2013-14), the state average of girl to boy ratio was about 94% per assembly constituency. In 2013-14, 2.54 lakh fewer girls than boys enrolled in government and private schools. Only in 11 assembly segments, the enrolment of girls has exceeded boys. Two constituencies in Bengaluru, Rajajinagar and BTM Layout, figure in the top 10 constituencies with low gender ratio.

99% WATER AND TOILET FACILITIES!

Surprisingly, the government has claimed that 99% of government schools have toilet facility for both boys and girls! Hubballi-Dharwad East assembly segment, which ranks the lowest, has 91% schools

with toilet facility for boys and 90% schools for girls. The assembly segments with 100% toilet facilities number 161 for boys and 184 for girls. Even private schools have scored well in the loo parameter. In another surprise, the government has claimed that barring two assembly constituencies - Kunigal and Sorab - the remaining 222 have 100% drinking water facility in government schools! In these two constituencies, 99% of government schools have drinking water. As far as private schools are concerned, the poorest drinking water facility is at Haliyal (96%). "These findings are indeed surprising to us. People should verify it and ask their representatives," said sociologist Chandan Gowda. Explaining the importance of the data, activist Ashwin Mahesh said: "Nobody is looking at the data systematically. The MLA can use the data to improve his understanding, make suggestions for improvement and ask the government for greater allocations, if the constituency is lagging behind on any parameter."

Source: The Times of India

Dalit panel without members for a year

Nepal

17th December

Kathmandu: The National Dalit Commission has been without members for a year, hampering its work on championing Dalit rights. The last time the Commission had a full

team, with a chairperson and 16 members, was when Baburam Bhattarai was the Prime Minister from August 2011 to March 2013. The two-year tenure of the members, whose number fluctuates

with each government, expired a year ago. "The Sushil Koirala-led government was supposed to appoint new members, but the political wrangling held the process back," says Dalmardhan Kami of Social Democratic Party.

The Commission, formed in 2002, safeguards Dalit rights, raises awareness against caste-based discriminations and lodges complaints of untouchability with police on behalf of victims. A National Dalit Rights Commission Bill drafted in 2009 tried to empower the Commission further by making it a constitutional body which can probe into cases of caste-based discriminations and recommend actions to the government.

The Bill, however, is yet to be passed into law. The bill also envisions a complete team with a chairperson and four members with four-year tenure. "We want a Dalit Commission that can play a constructive role in safeguarding Dalit rights in the new constitution," said Kami. Issuing a press release on Tuesday, the Social Democratic Party warned the government of a protest if the Commission remained with only its chairperson even after 15 days.

Source: The Kathmandu Post



Govt opposed to Dalit status for converts

New Delhi: The Centre believes that granting dalit status to converts from Islam and Christianity would encourage religious conversions, coming out against the demand that the list of Scheduled Castes be opened up beyond Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism.

Union social justice minister Thavar Chand Gehlot told TOI, "Allowing SC status to converts would provide a fillip to religious conversions. The demand is not constitutional and we want to work within the parameters of the statute for the welfare of these communities."

The unequivocal stance indicates that the Centre may oppose the demand of dalit Christians in the Supreme Court. The issue has been hanging fire as the UPA government, in its affidavit, continuously dragged its feet in the Court.

He calls for extension of dalit status to Christianity and Islam is a sensitive subject that has resulted in divisions among social groups. While the dalit converts have long complained that stigma of caste-system exists in their new religions and they be clubbed with SCs, a section of existing dalits oppose it out of the fear that new members to the SC list would

add more claimants for benefits like job reservations and cut into their share.

Groups like Sangh Parivar apprehend if dalit



status is opened to practitioners of Christianity and Islam, there would be nothing to stop dalits from changing faith. The ineligibility for welfare benefits is seen as a check against conversion.

On the other hand, he claimed the dalit converts are availing facilities extended to (backward) Christians and Muslims. "Now, if they get SC status, they will be eligible for dual benefits," he added.

According to the minister, the demand was unjustified because dalit-converts left the Hindu fold to escape the scourge of untouchability. "They converted to other religions because untouchability did not exist there. The conversion has solved the problems they faced as Hindus. So, they should not ask for SC status," he argued.

Coming out strongly against the campaign of dalit converts, the Union minister said the subject was debated in detail in the Constituent Assembly and has also been examined by government and the Supreme Court in the past. "They did not support it then and it should not be done now," he insisted.

Refusing to spell out the stand the government may take in the apex court, Gehlot said, "I am not aware of the affidavit the law ministry would file. But we are against opening dalit status to converts."

Source: The Times of India

HC comes down on caste-based slavery

Tamil Nadu

October 2, 2014

Madurai: Even 67 years after the country became free from the clutches of foreign rulers, the "sentimental slavery" sought to be enforced on people on the basis of caste discrimination has not reduced one bit, the Madras High Court Bench here has said.

Justice P.R. Shivakumar made the observation after highlighting the "disturbing factors" related to a group of Caste Hindus at Tiruvadanai in Ramanathapuram district preventing the Dalits in the village from living a decent life by creating a separate colony for them.

The judge said that it was obvious from the records that the revenue authorities in the district had allotted land to a Caste Hindu who already owned a house, but did not take any steps to provide house sites for the Dalits thereby forcing them to convert their wet lands into residential plots.

Subsequently, the Caste Hindu "created a document as if the land allotted to him was donated again to the government for the use of a school. Such ingenious methods were adopted to capture the land with the help of the officials and to deprive it to members of the scheduled castes," he said.

Even after the creation of the colony on agricultural lands, the Dalits suffered without a proper pathway for transporting their cattle and driving their carts and vehicles to the main road. When the officials failed to provide even that, they decided to lay a road on a portion of their private lands.

"While they were in the process of laying the road on portions of their private lands, the petitioners and other members', who are caste Hindus, did not want the people of the depressed community to live in dignity having an access to their colony. Hence, they raised objections and prevented the Dalits from doing so.

"The oppressed community preferred a complaint with Thondi police on August 17 last year... But an unscrupulous police officer failed to register a case... On the other hand, she invited the Caste Hindus to submit a counter complaint and forwarded both the complaints to the Tahsildar," the judge said. On October 18, 2013, "the then Tahsildar also without verifying who was the trouble-monger and without applying his mind" issued show cause notices to both the groups asking why they should not be ordered to execute a bond for keeping peace. Pointing out that the Caste Hindus had approached the court now challenging the notice issued to them, the judge dismissed their plea on the ground that interlocutory orders passed by Executive Magistrates could not be challenged through criminal revision petitions. He also directed the present Inspector of Thondi police station to register the complaint preferred by the Dalits last year or to face prosecution under Section 4 of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, which prescribes imprisonment up to one year for neglecting his duties.

Source: The Hindu

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U.N. Rights Chief Says Sri Lanka Is Obstructing War Crimes Inquiry



GENEVA — The United Nations human rights chief, Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, sharply rebuked the Sri Lankan government on Friday for “unacceptable conduct” for what he said were efforts to obstruct an investigation into possible war crimes in Sri Lanka.

The “continuing campaign of distortion and disinformation” as well as “insidious” attempts by the authorities to intimidate witnesses were an affront to the United Nations human rights body that had ordered the investigation, Mr. Zeid said.

His strongly worded statement was the latest twist in a diplomatic struggle to conduct a credible investigation of events in 2009, at the end of Sri Lanka's brutal civil war with Tamil Tiger separatists. An earlier panel of experts appointed by the United

Nations secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, concluded that up to 40,000 civilians were killed, mainly as a result of deliberate artillery bombardment by the army.

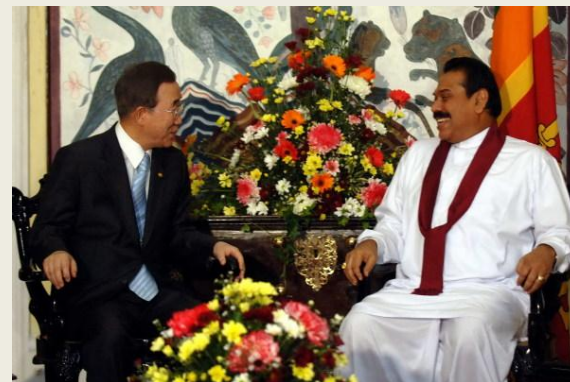
The United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva ordered the investigation in March after a series of inconclusive inquiries by the Sri Lankan authorities and in the face of fierce diplomatic resistance by the government to an external examination.

Sri Lanka has since refused to cooperate with the investigation. In a statement circulated to diplomatic missions in Geneva, the Sri Lankan foreign minister, G. L. Peiris, complained that the investigation's “flawed procedure infringed on the basic norms of justice and fair play.”

Mr. Zeid, rejecting the criticisms as “false and unsubstantiated,” went on to berate the government's efforts to block the investigation despite “persistent, compelling and widespread” allegations that serious international crimes were committed.

The Sri Lankan authorities had created a “wall of fear” through surveillance and harassment intended to deter people from submitting evidence, Mr. Zeid said, calling it “unacceptable conduct for any member state of the United Nations which has committed to uphold the U.N. Charter.”

The government's actions did not undermine the integrity of the investigation but instead raised “concerns about the integrity of the government in



question,” Mr. Zeid said. “Why would governments with nothing to hide go to such extraordinary lengths to sabotage an impartial international investigation?”

Source: New York Times

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Commission on Minorities Rights to be Set Up



Complying with the June 19 Supreme Court judgement on rights of minority communities, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has approved the setting up of a national commission on minorities to promote religious tolerance and harmony in the country.

The commission should also include representatives of all political and religious parties and legislators representing the minorities. Dr Ramesh Kumar

This information was shared with a three-member SC bench headed by Chief Justice Nasir-ul-Mulk, which had taken up a matter relating to implementation of its June 19 directives.

Deputy Attorney General Sohail Mehmood told the court that the commission would prepare a policy on inter-faith harmony and review laws, executive instructions and procedural practices of the government or government agencies and autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies reported to be discriminatory to the minorities.

Besides, he said, the prime minister had directed the authorities concerned to adhere to five per cent quota reserved for the minorities in government jobs. The Ministry for Religious Affairs has written letters to all government departments to implement the prime minister's directive. But a PML-N member of the National Assembly from Tharparkar, Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, also

patron-in- chief of the Pakistan Hindu Council, has rejected the commission, terming it just eye wash. He suggested that instead of the ministry supervising the commission, the prime minister himself should head it. It should work on the provinces, particularly Sindh, where places of worship of the minorities were not protected and Hindu girls were being subjected to forced conversion.

Member of the National Assembly from Tharparkar, Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, also patron-in- chief of the Pakistan Hindu Council, has rejected the commission, terming it just eye wash



The commission should also include representatives of all political and religious parties and legislators representing the minorities, he said. In its judgment, the apex court had suggested that a national council should be set up to protect the rights of the minorities.

Deputy Attorney General Mehmood told the court that the commission would ensure that buildings of churches,



Christian couple

shrines, temples, Gurdwaras and other places of worship of minority communities were preserved and maintained.

The commission will recommend to the government steps to ensure participation by members of minority communities in different aspects of national life.

Religious and cultural festivals will be held to promote religious diversity.

The commission will look into grievances of members of minority communities and make recommendations to the government to address them. It will take up cases of issuance of no objection certificates for the sale, purchase or transfer of communal properties of the minorities as provided under the Protection of Communal Properties of Minorities Ordinance 2001.

Moreover, Mr. Mehmood said, the federal government had ordered the chief secretaries of the provinces and the Capital Administration and Development Division to develop appropriate curricula for schools and colleges to promote religious and social tolerance.

The ministries of interior and information and the four chief

secretaries have been directed to take steps to discourage hate speech against the minorities in the social media.

In a related development, the Supreme Court has ordered to fix the matter relating to the Nov 6 Kot Radha Kishan tragedy in which a mob lynched a Christian couple over an alleged act of blasphemy by torturing and burning them to death in a kiln.

The date for placing the case before a bench has not yet been fixed but notices have been issued to the regional police officer and the district police officer concerned.

Source: Dawn



Report on Child Slavery in Indian Textile Production Leads to Action



The new report *Flawed Fabrics* of the India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN) and SOMO about child labour and 'modern slavery' in Indian spinning mills supplying to well-known garment brands clothing companies drew a lot of attention and led to various actions.

Flawed Fabrics shows that child labour, exploitation and forced labour are still a daily reality in the textile industry in South India. Girls and women are forced to work long hours for low wages. They live in hostels and are almost never allowed to leave the premises. The teenagers and young women are mostly belonging to poor and vulnerable Dalit communities. The five

researched spinning mills supply to western brands include C&A,

Primark and Replay and garment factories in Bangladesh. Most companies are still barely active to address these abuses.

Overwhelming media attention

The media attention following the publication of the report was overwhelming and still continues. *NOS Journaal* (Dutch TV news program), *Jeugdjournaal* (TV news program for the youth), the front page of the daily *Volkscrant* and many other Dutch newspapers and websites report about it. There were also many articles on English websites, including many fashion and clothing sites like *Vogue*. We wrote a blog for *The Guardian* website ourselves. The English *Times* has

published its own feature story, while referring to *Flawed*

Fabrics, which in turn was reported by various Indian media. The heading of the *Times* article reads: "The cotton in your clothes is probably made by girls of 11 paid 6 pound a month".

Companies announce action

Most companies mentioned responded to the report. Both C&A and Primark promised further investigation. "We appreciate your input and insights", wrote C&A to SOMO. Primark says 'to be happy with the report and the therein made call to action', reports the

44 million children work on a daily basis, especially in the garment and footwear industry and in agriculture

Volkscrant. H&M, which buys yarn from one of the investigated Indian spinners for its garment production in Bangladesh, severed the relationship. However SOMO and ICN do not agree with that approach. They asked H&M first to make efforts to improve the labour conditions in the supplying spinning mill.

The well-known certifying organization Social

Accountability International (SAI) responded in detail to the report. In two of the spinning mills approved by SAI serious violations were found to exist, the report concluded. SAI informed SOMO and ICN know that they consider the report as a complaint against the two spinning mills and will consider what improvements are needed. They will also look at the functioning of its accredited auditing firms.

Minister Ploumen talks to Indian colleague Gandhi

Already before the publication of the report ICN sent a letter to Minister Ploumen asking her to discuss the issue during a trade mission in early



November with her Indian colleagues and other stakeholders involved. In a public statement after on her trip she indeed said she discussed the issue with Minister for Women and Child Development, Mrs. Maneka Gandhi. Minister Ploumen said after her visit that child labour is still prevalent in India: "It is estimated that approximately 44 million children work on a

daily basis, especially in the garment and footwear industry and in agriculture... Minister Gandhi has indicated that she will work on this issue."

Answer to parliamentary questions by MP Voordewind unsatisfactory

In response to the report Member of Parliament Voordewind asked some questions to Minister Ploumen, including how she will address companies and trade associations on the issue and how she plans to work together with the EU, the ILO and the OECD to address "modern slavery" in the Indian textile industry. However, the Minister remains vague in her answers and says only what is done by those organizations in general, but nothing about what she will do specifically on this problem. She also does not say anything about possible follow-up appointments with Minister Gandhi to work on solutions.

Members European Parliament want action from European Commission

MEPs Peter van Dalen (CU), Agnes Jongerius (PvdA) and Cora van Nieuwenhuizen (VVD) ask the European Commission to raise the issue of (child) slavery in the South Indian textile industry to European companies that source their products. They also want the Commission to raise the issue to European trade organisations, the members of the EU, the Indian government, the International Labour Organisation and the OECD, in order for joint action to be undertaken.

The MEPs note that there is 'an

alarming lack of transparency' in the clothing companies in this and other issues. They ask the Commission to take the initiative to "significantly increase the level of



transparency and reporting of clothing companies with respect to their impact on human rights" and how the Commission will address this.

What does Stop Child Labour do?

Stop Child Labour and its member organisation India Committee of the Netherlands work on combating child labour, including in the production of textiles and garments. Therefore we participate in the working group on child labour which is part of the Plan of Action of the Dutch trade associations in the textile and clothing industry. We also cooperate with organisations in India to combat child labour and child slavery. We will continue to address child labour in the textile and clothing industry and to work on solutions together with local organisations, companies and governments.

Source: [the India Committee of the Netherlands \(ICN\)](#) and [SOMO](#)

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We Remind the Nation

The importance Pakistani nation gives to its minorities can be measured by public announcement of the founder of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, which he made just three days before the declaration of the partition of India. He said in his historical speech delivered in parliament on September 11, 1947 that: There would be complete freedom to the minorities in Pakistan for spending their lives according to their faith and life style. They will be absolutely free to go to their temple, churches, and other worship places for performing their religious practices.

It was not just the word of ordinary assurance after the formation of Pakistan when a three Member committee had been constituted under convener ship of Syed Ameer Hussain Qudwai, for designing the national flag of newly born nations, the committee followed Quaid's approach towards the minorities in the region by considering minorities as essential part of the nation, our First national assembly approved the proposed national flag, where, color white was suggested as the symbols of minorities. By adopting this two colored flag we gave message to the whole international community that minorities are essential section of Pakistani nation. Although minorities at large in Pakistan are satisfied, as they themselves and the people outside the country recognized this fact. Now when election campaign is going to stand, Sir Ganga Ram Heritage foundation remind the nation Particularly all political parties that chalking their election program they should keep in mind Quaid's and people's commitment with our friendly and patriotic minorities as Pakistani Muslim majority is religiously and morally bound to protect the interests and right of the minorities of the country.

**SIR GANGA RAM
HERITAGE FOUNDATION
LAHORE**