

ANNUAL REPORT MEGHALAYA STATE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

APRIL 2014- MARCH 2015



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PREFACE

The Commission once again brings out the Annual Report for the Year w.e.f. April 2014 March 2015. During this period, the Commission has taken up many issues and interventions to overcome many challenges, yet, we still have to go the extra mile to achieve the objective as laid down in the Act.

At this juncture, we are indebted to the State Government for their kind support and cooperation in strengthening the functions and roles of the Commission. We look forward for all the help and support from all likeminded Civil Societies and Organisations/ Institutions and Individuals for achieving the hope and aspiration of women who are in need of our assistance and services.



Smt. Theilin Phanbuh

Chairperson

Meghalaya State Commission for Women

COMPOSITION

MEMBERS MSCW			
Sl.No	Names	Designation	Duration
1.	Smti.Theilin Phanbuh	Chairperson	10 th January 2013 till date
2.	Smti. Gamchi Time R.Marak	Vice- Chairperson	12 th September 2013 till date
3.	Smti. Meena Kharkongor	Member	21 st November 2011-25 th August 2014
4.	Smti. (Kumari) Wimon Tariang	Member	21 st November 2011-20 th November 2014
5.	Smti. Angela R. Watre Ingti	Member	21 st November 2011-20 th November 2014
6.	Smti. Nakilin Shylla	Member	23 rd July 2014 till date
7.	Sister Judith Shadap	Member	23 rd July- 20th November 2014
8.	Smti. Rebina Subba	Member	21 st November 2014 till date
9.	Dr.N.Sutnga	Member	21 st November 2014 till date
10.	Smti.Charlotte M.Momin	Member	21 st November 2014 till date
11.	Smti.Iadalyne Tariang	Member Secretary	March 2012- Till date

STAFF STRENGTH OF THE COMMISSION		
Sl.No	NAME	DESIGNATION
1.	Smt. Iadalyne Tariang	Member Secretary
2.	Smt. Annie Sohtun	Coordinator
3.	Smt. Emilda Sohtun	U.D.A cum Accountant
4.	Smt. Glady. M. Shabong	Computer Operator
5.	Shri. Cleverly.J.Nongbet	L.D.A
6.	Smt. Persara Mawlong	L.D.A
7.	Smt. Markynti Syiemlieh	Peon
8.	Ms.Glarity Lyngdoh	Peon
9.	Shri. Gilbert Lyngdoh	Driver
10.	Shri. Micheal Warjri	Driver
11.	Shri. Jurbor Dkhar	Chowkidar
12.	Shri. Maxstar Rapsang	Cleaner

INTERACTIVE PROGRAMME ON ISSUES RELATED TO WOMEN & CHILDREN

On 6th June 2014, the Meghalaya State Commission for Women had organized a one day interactive programme at Mawlasnai village, Ri Bhoi District. This programme was attended by heads of Traditional Institutions & women's group from Mawlasnai and its neighbouring villages, the Chairperson, MSCW, officials from Social Welfare Department, & members of the Commission. During the interactive programme, Shri. P.Marwein, General Secretary of Mawlasnai village, said that for the first time such programme is being organized for women and it is indeed going to be beneficial. Problems of early marriage, teenage pregnancy, desertion, domestic violence exist in the village. There were suggestions that the Commission's intervention is needed in creating awareness about issues related to women and children and that there is a need for a coordinated effort amongst the head of different traditional institutions to bring about improvement in the living conditions and status of women and children.

INDEPENDENT INQUIRY

The Meghalaya State Commission for Women had conducted an independent inquiry into the alleged torture, abduction and confinement of the twelve girls accused of sex racket by the members of AMA, CSWO, and GHSHR at Daldagre, West Garo Hills from 20 May to 21 June 2014. The Meghalaya State Commission for Women Inquiry Committee was constituted on the 12th of May to conduct an inquiry into the above matter. The inquiry started on the 20th of May 2014 where the Chairperson met with Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendant of Police, West Garo Hills for first hand information. The Commission met the twelve victims on the 21st of May at the designated Shelter Home (SMELC) and took their statement individually. Throughout the inquiry, the Commission took statements from 44 witnesses. The findings and suggestions of the MSCW Inquiry Committee were submitted to the Honourable Home Minister & Principal Secretary, Social Welfare, Government of Meghalaya.

Some of the key suggestions that emerged out of the inquiry committee are as follows:

- There is a lot of ignorance about legal provisions/matters all around. Sincere efforts will have to be made to create awareness in the churches, medical professionals, administration, police, all educational institutions and society in general.
- Workshops, seminars, hoardings, etc should all be intensified to spread awareness. The need of the hour is a close cooperation and coordination urgently required to be taken seriously amongst the district administration/authorities/civil societies and the general public at large to avoid the occurrence of such incidents in the future.
- There should be more street lights and patrolling for the safety and security of the citizens in the urban and rural areas as well, to avoid the occurrence of undesirable incidents, especially for the women and children.
- Counseling centers, especially for adolescent youth are urgently needed.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS

A Leadership Training & Capacity building for Adolescent Girls has been organised on the 1st & 2nd August 2014 at the Meghalaya Bharat Scout and Guides by the Meghalaya State Commission for Women. The objective of the programme was to provide and equip young girls with information and knowledge on various rights, gender, leadership skills and other issues related to young girls to help them in developing their personality and decision making. More than 36 students from different educational institutions in the three district of Jaintia, Ri Bhoi & East Khasi Hills participated in the programme. The feedback of one of the participants as quoted "everything that was taught was very useful and informative and has broadened my view and perspective of the things I learnt. I intend to not only use it for my benefit but spread the knowledge I have gained". The Resource Persons for the two days programme were from People's Learning Centre, Teach for India fellow, Meghalaya Police, Health Department and Meghalaya State Commission for Women. The Valedictory function and distribution of Certificates was presented by Smti.Theilin Phanbuh, Chairperson, MSCW.

SPOT INQUIRY

In connection with the murder of a young girl at Williamnagar, East Garo Hills, Smti.Theilin Phanbuh, Chairperson, Meghalaya State Commission for Women and her team held an emergency meeting with all the NGOs & student bodies of the District at the Conference Room Circuit House at 4:30 p.m. After hearing from all the student bodies, NGOs and individuals, the Chairperson, MSCW appeal to everyone to remain calm in the hour of crises but to allow the Law enforcing agency to proceed further with the detail investigation. She also requested them to extend their full support and helping hand in cooperating with all the Departments concern so as to make the case stronger, she called all witness to come forward and not shy away at the time of investigation and be ready to stand in the Court so that justice can be delivered to the family and the society.

The Commission visited the aggrieved family to show their solidarity later in the evening and to give their moral support especially to the mother to stand firm in what she believed that the step father is the real culprit who has taken away the life of her daughter, The Chairperson also requested all the relatives and clan members present to lend their full support to the family and the investigating team during the visit. On the 9th October 2014, a meeting was held with the District Administration and the Police to review the progress and status of the case. A detailed report was briefed by the Superintendent of Police, Shri. D.N.R. Marak. After hearing the report, the Commission is fully satisfied and happy with the progress of the investigation.

The Commission also visited the Sacred Heart HSS and met the Principal of the school to express their solidarity with them. The school authority has also assured that they will help and cooperate with the investigating team.

VISIT TO THE DISTRICT JAIL FOR WOMEN IN SHILLONG

On the 10th July 2014, the Chairperson and Members of the Commission visited the District Jail for Women in Shillong and interacted with the Jail authority as well as inspected the accommodation facilities provided for the female inmates. The members inquired about their respective cases held in different court and were satisfied with the proceeding of each case. Altogether there were 11 inmates during the visit.

The Commission observed that the rooms were small and congested and the living arrangement needs to be improved. Vocational training provided is not up to the mark and extra training to be enhanced. It was suggested that a separate nursing room for mothers with children and counseling session for the inmates needs to be provided.

VISIT TO GANESH DAS HOSPITAL, SHILLONG

The Meghalaya State commission for Women in its visit to Ganesh Das Hospital on the 15th October 2014 met the Medical Superintendent, who briefed the members on the health care facilities provided for women and children in the wake of the recent fire that broke out at the labour room complex on the 6th October 2014.

The Commission inspected the Labour room and other wards located in the hospital complex. The renovation work is in progress and temporary arrangement to ensure limited delivery services is being done. It was learned that normal services will be functioning soon. The Commission observed that there are limited services of manpower to cater to the needs of children in the 100 bedded Pediatric Ward. The Commission is impressed with the facilities at the ICU, but unfortunately the acute shortage of nursing staff is disheartening.

The Commission felt that there is an urgent need to complete the newly constructed hospital complex in view of the increase number of registered cases of women and children. It is also viewed with serious concern regarding the shortage of manpower which needs to be strengthened as per the guidelines since it is the only hospital catering to the need of women and children.

MEETING ON CRIME AGAINST WOMEN

A meeting on crime against women was held on the 18 November 2014 for Government officials at the office of the Meghalaya State Commission for Women to discuss about the rising trends of crime against women and children in the State which is alarming and distressing. It was attended by representatives from the District Council Court Police, Health, Social Welfare, Meghalaya State Legal Service Authority, State commission for Protection of child rights and members of the Commission. Some of the important suggestions that emerge out of the meeting are as follows:-

1. To intensify awareness programme and sensitization on a regular basis for all stake holders including both the courts.
2. To request the Government to notify and revive the functioning of all Fast Track Court in the state.
3. To request Government to issues necessary direction to concern Department to regulate the accessibility of young people to mobiles/internet especially in schools and to get the porn sites blocked.
4. The Department concern to issues directions to all CHCs/PHCs to inform victims about the existence of the rape victim compensation scheme.
5. To request investigation to collect strong evidence for smooth trials.
6. To request concern department to appoint female prosecutor for any such victims.
7. To follow up the setting up of the One Stop Crises Centre for women by the Government.
8. To make it mandatory that compensation to Minor Rape victim should not be compromised.
9. To request Government to notify the functioning of all District Legal Services Authority in the state and the District Level committee on Crimes and Violence against women.
10. To sensitize and integrate religious denomination and civil society about the issues.

MEETING TO DISCUSS THE VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION BILL

The Meghalaya State Commission for Women had organized a meeting on the 20th February 2015 to discuss about the Draft Village Administration Bill, 2010. Representatives of women's organization and civil society organisation attended the meeting and gave their inputs. They suggested that the Khasi Hills Autonomous District (Village Administration) Bill, 2010 needs more Gender Representation and that the Executive Dorbar should have women representation. This will ensure that the Dorbar Shnong will function in a more participatory and to strengthen the democratic structure as enshrined in our constitution. They further expressed that certain terms in the Bill are confusing and needs clarification.

CAMPAIGN PROTESTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

25th NOVEMBER 10th DECEMBER 2014

SYMPOSIUM ON MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

To observe the International Day for the Elimination of all forms of violence against women, the Meghalaya State Commission for Women in collaboration with Martin Luther Christian University organized a symposium on Media and Technology; its implication on women and girls on the 25th November 2014 for college students. The objective of the programme was to deliberate on the importance of using technology in a beneficial way and to avoid its misuse, since there have been a lot cases where women and girls have been exploited and harassed through technology.

Inspector General of Police, Meghalaya, Shri. G.H.P Raju (IPS) said that while the use of technology and gadgets like smart phone, ipads, laptop, and computers has reduced the isolation between human beings, it has also made us more vulnerable to cyber crimes. Further he urged the MSCW to organize similar awareness programme for parents. Smti. Patricia Mukhim, Editor of The Shillong Times, shared her views on the ethics and sensitivity of the press in relation to women and girls. Dr. S. Maxwell Lyngdoh enlightened the participants on the effects of media on women and girls.

ROAD SHOW

As a part of the '16th Days of Activism' campaign against violence against women, the Meghalaya State Commission for Women in collaboration with Martin Luther Christian University organized a daylong road show in the populated areas of Madanrying, Jhalupara and culminated at Polo market on the 2nd December 2014.

The students put together plays in Khasi and Hindi to portray an instance of domestic violence within a marriage, incorporating ways in which victims can seek help from the Meghalaya State Commission for Women or the District Social Welfare Officer of the respective district.

Apart from the plays, the students also used slogans, charts, question and answer sessions and flex displays to get the message of the road show across to the people.

ADVOCACY AND INTERACTIVE MEETING WITH FAITH BASED ORGANIZATION, NGOS AND TRADITIONAL INSTITUTION ON VARIOUS ISSUES RELATED TO CRIME AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

On December 10th 2014 an Advocacy and Interactive Meeting with the Faith Based Organizations, NGOs and Traditional Institutions was organized by the Meghalaya State Commission for Women to commemorate World Human Rights Day. The meeting was held with the objective of developing a close network of Faith Based Organizations, NGOs, Government and Traditional Institution to check the menace of crime against Women and children which has become a dominating social, political and legal problem all over the country and the state of Meghalaya is no exception to it. The meeting was attended by the leading personalities from the faith Based Organizations, NGOs, Traditional Institutions, State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights, Law Enforcement Agencies, Social Welfare department, Media and the members of the meeting, there was presentation and interaction whereby a commitment to eradicate the menace of crime against women and children were highlighted and deliberated upon the ways and means to tackle the issue.

RALLY CUM AWARENESS PROGRAMME

The World Human Rights day was observed in Williamnagar on the 10th of December 2014. The Meghalaya State commission for Women in collaboration with the District Legal Services Authority and action Aid Association organized a Rally Cum Awareness Programme to mark the 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women. School students, members of non-government organizations and concern citizens attended the rally. The Awareness programme was inaugurated by Shri. W.Diengdoh, District Session Judge, East Garo Hills, Williamnagar.

SURVEY ON THE SOCIO ECONOMIC, LEGAL & POLITICAL STATUS FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

The National Commission for Women, New Delhi, constitutes expert Committees (EC) for dealing with special issues taken up by the Commission from time to time. One of the Committee that was constituted is the expert Committee on Social, Economic and Political Empowerment of Women in North East States in collaboration with State Women Commissions. The term of reference are as follows:-

1. Make policy recommendations for development and empowerment of women in NE on Social, Economic and Political related issues of respective NE states and suggest a strategy for implementation.
2. Suggestions and recommendations for better implementation of existing policies, programmes and schemes for the welfare of women of NE.
3. Review of customary laws and any other aspect related to development and safety of women that concerns the women of NE region and recommendations thereof.

All State Women Commission of NE State would undertake work relating to the EC in their respective states. In addition, Sub-Committee of Experts has also been constituted in each NE state to assist the SWC in the work.

In view of the above, the Meghalaya state Commission for Women with the support of Martin Luther Christian University, Meghalaya, Shillong is conducting a survey on the Socio-Economic, Legal and Political Status for the Empowerment of Women in the State. This is a onetime exercise after a gap of many years. The objective of the survey would serve as a major baseline of the current status of women in the aspect as mentioned above, the expert committee both at the state and the centre will analyse the outcome and make policy recommendation for development and empowerment of existing policies, programmes and schemes for the welfare of women in the state. The report of the study is scheduled to be completed within the month of July 2015.

SANCTIONED AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MEGHALAYA STATE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN 2013 2014

- An amount of Rs. 26, 00,000/- (Twenty Six Lakhs) only was sanctioned vide memo No. MSCW/BA/2004/Pt.II/10080 Dated Shillong the 16th December 2014.

CASES RECEIVED AT THE MSCW (APRIL 2014-MARCH 2015)	
NO OF HEARINGS CONDUCTED	18
Total Number of Cases Registered	97
Number of Cases Disposed and Settled	26
Number of Cases Referred to Concerned Authorities	44
Number of Cases Under Process/ Pending	27

SELECTED SUCCESS CASE STORIES

Withholding of Salary- dated 1st January 2014

An aggrieved woman who is a school teacher had approached MSCW with a complaint that the school authority had withheld her salary for four months without any reason or clarification.

The Commission took action upon the complaint and wrote to the Managing Committee of the concern school. In the month of March 2014, the commission received a letter from the aggrieved woman stating that has received her full salary and that she is grateful for the intervention by the Commission.

Maintenance Claim - dated 25th August 2014

An aggrieved woman had approached MSCW with a plea for support to attain maintenance from her husband who is already married with three children from the first wife. The respondent was asked to inform his wife before signing the agreement for maintenance.

In the following day, an agreement was made between the two parties stating that the husband should pay a substantial amount as maintenance to the second wife through bank transfer before the 10th of every month.

Maintenance Claim- dated 26th June 2014

An aggrieved woman who is nine months pregnant had approached the Commission with a request to attain medical and financial support from her husband who had deserted her and her four children. The respondent failed to appear for hearing after being summoned for more than three times. The Commission sought the help of the Superintendent of Police to secure the attendance of the respondent. On 29/9/2014, an agreement was made for payment of pending house rent and maintenance money to be paid to her by cash with effect from October 2014.

PHOTOGRAPHS

LEADERSHIP TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING



MEETING ON CRIME AGAINST WOMEN



CAMPAIGN



**VISIT OF SMT. SHAMINA SHAFIQUE, MEMBER,
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN, NEW DELHI
7th -9th FEBRUARY 2015**

**MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES
OF WOMEN'S ORGANISATION FROM SHILLONG**



TRAINING OF SURVEYORS



MEETING TO DISCUSS THE VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION BILL



PRESS CLIPPINGS

THE SHILLONG TIMES
1ST NOVEMBER 2014

TELEGRAPH GUWAHATI
DAY 3 AUGUST 2014

Girls get valuable training

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Shillong, Aug. 2: The Meghalaya State Commission for Women organised a two-day leadership training and capacity-building programme for adolescent girls here.

The programme was to equip young girls with information and knowledge on rights, leadership skills and relevant issues to help them develop their personality and enhance decision-making abilities. More than 36 students from different educational institutions of Jaintia hills, Ri Bhoi and East Khasi Hills districts participated in the programme.

"Everything that was taught was very useful and informative and has broadened my view and perspective of the things I learnt. I intend to not only use it for my benefit but to also spread the knowledge I have gained," one of the participants said.

The resource persons for the two-day programme were from the People's Learning Centre, Meghalaya police, health department and Meghalaya State Commission for Women.

Commission chairperson Theilin Phanbuh attended the valedictory programme today where certificates were distributed to the participants.

Leadership training for adolescent girls concludes

By A Reporter

SHILLONG: A two-day training programme on Leadership Training and Capacity Building for Adolescent Girls organized by the Meghalaya State Commission for Women culminated at the Bharat Scouts and Guides centre here on Friday. The objective of the training programme was to help incorporate leadership skills, personality development and decision-making powers among the adolescent girls in order for them to cope with situations in the future in a better way.

A total of 36 girls who came from Garo Hills attended the various training sessions on enhancing leadership qualities, confidence building, gender sensitization, cyber-crimes, bearer's rights, sexual health and development of communication skills.

The training was conducted by various resource persons from Ganesh Das Hospital, Martin Luther Christian University and from the Commission itself.

Thalin Phanbuh, chairperson of the Meghalaya State Commission for Women, informed that the commission has already organized seven legal awareness programs in the state this year.

MSCW to press for women's participation in local bodies

By Our Reporter

SHILLONG: The Meghalaya State Commission for Women (MSCW) has asserted that it would take up the matter of women not being allowed to be part of the traditional local bodies in Meghalaya.

Speaking to media persons here on Tuesday, MSCW Chairperson Theilin Phanbuh said that the Commission had discussed the matter with NGOs and citizens and added that the matter would be taken up with the concerned authorities.

While admitting that women in the North East region enjoyed more respect as compared to other parts of the country, she lamented that women here continue to suffer from several problems such as domestic violence and other forms of crime.

The statement from the MSCW comes ahead of a unique concert 'Loud and Clear' scheduled to be organised in the city on Feb 28 to mark International Women's Day which falls on March 8.

Out of the four bands participating in the concert, three would be all-women bands from the region.

"The concert aims at celebrating womanhood and will be telecast on a number of channels under the Sure Waves Spot TV Network in the North East region on a prime time slot on March 8 when the entire world would celebrate International Women's Day," the state-

NEWS BRIEF

MSCW shocked by killing in South Garo Hills

Staff Reporter

SHILLONG, June 04: The Meghalaya State Commission for Women (MSCW) has expressed its shock on hearing the news of the gruesome killing of an innocent woman in South Garo Hills District. The Commission has viewed this incident with grave concern and has strongly condemned it.

The Commission has also strongly appealed to all Civil Societies/NGOs and communities to show zero tolerance to such violence and brutality which is so inhuman besides requesting the Government to immediately take the matter up with the concerned authorities for prompt action to ensure that the perpetrators are caught and booked as per the law.

The Commission has also expressed in solidarity their deep sense of sorrow and grief and extends their condolences to the bereaved family which has to face such a tragic loss.

Torture of 12 girls in Tura: Home Minister seeks report from DC

Govt orders high-level inquiry

By Our Reporter

**MSCW too forms
probe panel**
By Our Reporter

SHILLONG: Taking cognizance of the alleged illegal confinement, kidnapping and torture of 12 girls in Tura, the state government has ordered a high-level inquiry into the incident even as Home Minister Roshan Warjri has sought a report from the Deputy Commissioner of West Garo Hills Pravin Bakshi on the matter.

The decision to probe the incident was taken after the Social Welfare Minister Deborah C. Marak held a meeting to discuss the issue.

The high-level inquiry committee will be headed by commissioner & secretary of Secretariat Administration Department (SAD) M.H.K. Marak.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Deborah Marak said that she wanted an impartial probe into the entire episode, adding the committee would be assisted by the district social welfare officer/joint district social welfare officer, Tura.

The committee would inquire into the allegations made in local newspapers and the circumstances there under; to inquire into the nature and extent of injuries of the victims and the medical support or assistance rendered to them; to examine the relevant

SHILLONG: The Meghalaya State Commission for Women (MSCW) has decided to institute an inquiry into the alleged kidnapping and confining of twelve women in Tura.

Informing this here on Monday, MSCW chairperson Theilin Phanbuh said the inquiry panel will be headed by its vice chairperson Gamchi Marak, who will be assisted by a member Angela Ingty.

According to Phanbuh, the commission would take at least one month's time to submit its report and added that the members of the panel would meet all the 12 victims to record their statements.

Meanwhile, Marak said the inquiry panel had been constituted to find the truth.

witnesses; and to suggest suitable remedial measures.

The inquiry committee would have to submit its report within a month.

Earlier, five self-styled activists were arrested in connection with illegal confinement, kidnapping and torture of the teenagers who were held captive for eight day by the 'activists'

ANDREW W. LYNDOH

Shillong, July 11: The Meghalaya State Commission for Women has come down heavily on "social activists" in the alleged detention and torture of 12 girls in Tura under West Garo Hills, and termed the incident as a case of "moral policing" and "gross violation of human rights".

The commission, which had conducted an inquiry into the incident, had submitted its report to the state government recently. In the course of the inquiry, the commission had examined 44 people, including the girls.

These 12 girls, who were branded "call girls" by the "activists", were allegedly detained, tortured and assaulted in the rented accommodation of one of the "activists", Jaynie Ningring Sangma, at Daldagre in Tura.

According to the commission, which released its findings to the media today, the girls were reportedly picked up from vehicles at Chasingre, Orchid lodge at Asanang and from their respective homes at intervals on different dates.

The girls were kept at Jaynie's rented house from May 1 to May 8, the commission said. It also said that the NGOs involved in the incident were the Civil Society Women's Organisation, Achik Mothers' Association and Garo Hills Sentinel for Human Rights.

"Many witnesses have confirmed the torture, including physical assault, verbal assault, intimidation and public viewing and humiliation of victims as sex workers, also allowing of taking pictures, videos of the beatings, uploading of the same on the social media and threat to life. One girl was so intimidated that she was even contemplating suicide," the commission observed.

From the statement of all the victims, the commission concluded that it was clear that they were "illegally detained, confined and tortured, both physically and mentally, and also threatened with dire consequences by taking the

Women's panel raps NGOs



Meghalaya State Commission for Women chairperson Theilin Phanbuh and vice-chairperson Gamchi Marak (right) in Shillong on Friday. Picture by Evanjolin Dkhar

names of militant groups (GNLA)".

Commission vice-chairperson Gamchi Marak and member Angela R. Ingty had conducted the probe into the incident.

While Marak stated that it could not be established that the 12 victims were "call girls", the findings pointed out that the incident was "very much a stark case of moral policing and vigilantism disregarding the law and duping the administration, police and public". A gross violation of human rights was also observed in the case, the commission added.

The commission said West Garo Hills deputy commissioner Pravin Bakshi "had an inkling" of what was going, but was "not aware" that Jaynie and her group were detaining the girls and keeping them confined. Bakshi was "only in the knowledge" that Jaynie and others were "counselling" the girls, the commission claimed.

"A mediator reportedly co-ordinated and acted as a go-between the administration and the NGOs in the matter of premeditated busting of the alleged sex racket. The administration viewed the NGOs at face value and took the matter lightly without verifying their antecedents. The media seems to have called all the shots and was reluctant to inform the police on the matter," the findings revealed.

The deputy commissioner had suggested that the media

person co-ordinate with the police during the raid, which the latter had failed to do so and this reflects the lack of co-ordination between the administration and the police, the commission added.

Coming to the church members, the commission said those who were called to give counselling were not provided with full information about the torture, all of which continued even as the "spiritual counselling" was taking place.

"The Church is also found to be too trusting and ignorant of women's legislation and related laws. Without verifying matters, it went about counselling the girls," the findings stated.

Further, the findings noted that the NGOs had a "nexus" with some police personnel and reportedly worked together. However, it said West Garo Hills superintendent of police Mukesh Singh was found "to be unaware of the happenings".

"The subordinates failed to report to their higher-ups. The policeman in question (B.N. Marak) failed to go by the rules, and acted on emotions without verifying the claims of the NGOs. The inspector concerned had not even called the women police or taken the girls to the women's cell of the police station, but instead, informed the NGOs and handed the girls over to them, which is highly illegal and unfounded," the commission pointed out.

The failure on the officer's

part had "complicated the whole situation", it added.

On May 1 evening, during vehicular checks, Marak had reportedly zeroed on two vehicles, one coming from Williamnagar and the other from Tura, the commission said.

The Williamnagar vehicle had four occupants, of whom two of them were girls while the other had six occupants, of whom three were girls, the commission said.

The policeman then reportedly informed the "activists", the commission said, adding that while the police took away the five men to the police station, the "activists" brought the girls to Jaynie's house.

In the subsequent days, the other seven girls were picked up from different places in and around Tura, it added.

From the overall observations, the commission said it was found that the so-called "torture was made at the house and not at the police station".

"Even the doctor stated that the bruises appearing on some of the girls' bodies were not fresh bruises as the victims were sent for medical check-up on May 8 itself," the commission said.

Moreover, the commission noted that several illegal activities were openly taking place in Tura district jail where prisoners could even have access to mobile phones and interact with the outside world.

It also said prisoners were beaten up inside the jail, but the jail authorities have not been serious enough to communicate this to their seniors to correct the system for the safety of the prisoners.

Apart from the findings, the commission had also submitted a slew of suggestions to the government to prevent similar occurrences from recurring. One of these suggestions includes that the district administration should be more vigilant about different NGOs and not just listen to them at face value. It also suggested conducting legal awareness drive and setting up of a shelter home.

Panel appeals to witnesses

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Shillong, Oct. 10: The Meghalaya State Commission for Women has urged witnesses to come forward and aid the investigation into the alleged rape and murder of a 15-year-old girl in Meghalaya's East Garo Hills district.

The team from the commission, led by commission chairperson Theilin Phanbuh, was on a two-day visit to Williamnagar, the district headquarters of East Garo Hills, about 370km from here, to meet NGOs, students' groups and district administration officials.

The beheaded body of the teenager, whose stepfather was arrested on charges of rape and murder, was recovered on Sunday night from a forest, which is around 5km from Williamnagar.

The accused, Rashu N. Marak, was arrested on the basis of an FIR filed by his wife on September 29. The victim, a 15-year-old, had gone missing on September 28.

During the meeting with students' groups, NGOs and others on Wednesday in Williamnagar, Phanbuh appealed to witnesses to come forward, aid investigation into the case, and to be ready to stand in the court so that justice could be done to the family and society.

The commission's members also visited the aggrieved family to show their solidarity, and to give moral support to the girl's mother to stand firm in what she believed that the stepfather was the real culprit who had taken away the life of her daughter.

Phanbuh also requested the relatives and clan members of the girl to support the family and the investigating team. Yesterday, a meeting was held with the district administration and the police to review the progress of the case.

East Garo Hills superintendent of police Davis N.R. Marak gave a detailed report



Participants and officials in the meeting at Williamnagar

of the case and the commission members were satisfied with the progress of the investigation.

Nation-building starts in educational institutions: GHP Raju

By Our Reporter

SHILLONG: Addressing a group of college and university students to observe, 'International Day for the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women,' organised by the State Commission for Women in collaboration with Martin Luther Christian University, Inspector General of Police, Meghalaya, GHP Raju said that while the use of technology and gadgets like smart phones, ipads, laptop computers etc has reduced the isolation between human beings it has also made us more vulnerable to cyber crimes.

Raju warned the audience about uploading private pictures on Whatsapp because those pictures can be accessed by cyber criminals and morphed in order to blackmail or stalk a person.

He said that mobile service providers regularly sell client information to companies for a sum and that is how

different companies send mobile advertisements to mobile phone users.

"There is no such thing as a protected password or privacy in the virtual world. Every document can be accessed by the service providers like Google," Raju informed.

Speaking about the rights of a girl child or woman not to allow unwanted advances by the opposite sex and to be touched, Raju said it is the duty of schools and colleges to educate the students about these rights and what redress they could seek against those who make these advances.

"Child pornography is the biggest trap and many cyber criminals morph the innocent faces of children to produce such visuals. Visiting pornographic sites is an offence under the Information Technology Act," Raju informed adding that at malls and garment stores where women try on their clothes before buying them, they should be extra cautious to find out if some hidden camera is placed any-

where inside the trial rooms.

Raju further exhorted the State Commission for Women to organize similar awareness programmes for parents. He said parents should monitor who the Facebook friends of their teenage children are and who they are chatting with because a stranger could get their private information and use that to blackmail them or for other criminal purposes.

Earlier, Patricia Mukhim, Editor, *The Shillong Times*, spoke about ethics and sensitization of the media vis-à-vis eliminating violence against women. She stated that the media follows a set of ethics but media persons still need to build their capacities in understanding gender concepts and sensitive reportage.

Others who spoke on the occasion included N.G. Shylla, an advocate, Theilin Phanbuh, Chairperson, State Commission for Women and Melari Diengdoh, Dept. of Social Work, MLCU.

Women's panel organises street play

By Our Reporter

SHILLONG: As part the *16 Days of Activism* campaign against domestic violence and violence against women, the Meghalaya State Commission for Women in collaboration with the MSW 3rd semester students of Martin Luther Christian University and Yes Bank organized a one-day road show here on Tuesday to spread awareness on the prevalent social issue of violence against women and foster ownership of the issue amongst the denizens of Shillong.

The road show was conducted with Sawlad as the starting point and then proceeded on to the key populated areas of Madanryting, Jhalupara and finally culminated at the busy Polo market area. (Contd on P-10)

Women's panel for science labs to ensure justice

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Shillong, Feb. 9: The National Commission for Women (NCW) has sent a proposal to the Centre to establish and strengthen robust and state-of-the-art Forensic Science Laboratories in the country in order to ensure speedier and effective investigations, especially in relation to crimes against women.

This was disclosed today by NCW member Shamina Shafiq, who had been camping in the state since Saturday. She met women's groups, NGOs, government officials and members of the Meghalaya State Commission for Women. "A proposal has been sent

to the Centre to provide financial assistance under the Nirmaya Fund for establishing such Forensic Science Laboratories (FSLs)," Shafiq told journalists.

She was answering queries on the lack of state-of-the-art FSLs in the country, particularly in the Northeast, which has hampered investigations on various crimes, especially crimes against women.

The FSL in Meghalaya has been a target of criticism for being ill-equipped to deal with several cases. In most instances, forensic materials have to be sent to places like Calcutta for examination, which only lead to delays in solving crimes.

Shafiq also disclosed that the NCW would embark on a socio-economic and political survey of women across the country, beginning with the Northeast.

The Meghalaya State Commission for Women along with the social work department of the Martin Luther Christian University (MLCU) will conduct the sample survey.

The survey is meant to prepare policy recommendations for the development and empowerment of women on social, economic and political issues. The NCW has made the exercise flexible as states are allowed to put in questions, which are in sync with the socio-economic and political



NCW member Shamina Shafiq at the news conference in Shillong on Monday. Picture by UB Photos

landscape of the states. In Meghalaya, the sample survey will cover around 1,100 women who are 18 years and

above in all the 11 districts of the state. The areas to be covered include urban, semi-urban and rural.

Two surveyors will be put in place in each of the districts. The exercise is likely to commence from this week onwards, as the sample survey has to be completed within 60 days.

According to the 2011 census, Meghalaya has 14,75,057 women out of the total population of 29,64,007. The country's female population as per the same census stands at 587,447,730 out of a total population of 1,210,569,573.

"We are more interested to know the status of accessing state and centrally sponsored

programmes especially by women in the rural areas," the NCW member said.

Shafiq, who was all praise for Meghalaya's matrilineal system, the institution of headmen and the presence of Asia's cleanest village at Mawlynnong, wondered why women were not given space in the executive committees of village councils (*dorbar shnong*).

"I am impressed with the institution of headmen in the villages, but yesterday when I met the headmen of Sohryngham (one of the biggest villages) I asked him why women are not being made members of the executive committees of village councils. I feel it would

be of great significance if women are also made members of these committees," Shafiq told reporters before she left for New Delhi.

However, the NCW member expressed concern when it was pointed out that tardy investigations and low conviction rate in cases related to crimes against women.

On what has changed after the Delhi rape case of December 2012, Shafiq claimed that people's mindsets in the country vis-a-vis women's issues had altered for the better.

"The enactment of stringent laws in regard to crimes against women had also been done, but we need better implementation," she said.

PUBLICATIONS

During this financial year, the Meghalaya State Commission for Women had published Flyer in English and Khasi, Booklet in Garo and Khasi and a Newsletter for the Year 2014.

