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The Shillong Times, 7th October 2015: MSCW chief laments inadequate number of judicial officers in Meghalaya

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Slow trials embolden criminals: Phanbuh

By Our Reporter

SHILLONG: Slow trial and conviction due to inadequate number of judicial officers in the State has emboldened the criminals resulting in a rise in the number of cases of crimes against women.

In an interview to *The Shillong Times*, Theilin Phanbuh, Chairperson, State Women's Commission, has expressed her dissatisfaction on the slow trials for conviction that lead to high incidences of violence against women.

She maintained that though the Police department was doing its part, the process of conviction is slow as "there is less number of judicial officers in the court slowing down the trial process."

"It is a letdown because of less conviction cases and the accused get the opportunity to go scot-free," she added.

Moreover, less number of convictions has also affected the justice delivery system adding to the miseries of women victims of various crimes in State, she stated.

There are 62 recorded cases of violence against women in the State since January till date, the MSCW chief informed.

Speaking on the reasons behind crimes against women, Phanbuh said, "Crimes against women are committed within the family also and due to prevalence of drug addiction, easy access to the internet and pornography which affect the young minds."

On being asked as to which district was more vulnerable to such crimes, she said, "I cannot pinpoint any district or place. There is no difference between urban and rural crime figures."

She, however, emphasized that (Contd on P-10)

Slow trials embolden...

(Contd from P-1) the western part of Meghalaya was neglected.

On the role of the Commission, Phanbuh said it was working to ensure that crimes against women are reduced. The Commission mainly focuses itself in rural parts of Meghalaya, where they conduct street plays and awareness programmes in collaboration with NGOs, Phanbuh said, adding, "These women from the rural areas do not even know that there is law that protect their rights."

"We have to go through every process, to work together with the village heads at the community level.

The Commission has approach schools on the outskirts of Shillong to participate in the initiatives to create awareness on the issue," she said, while mentioning that the response has been fairly good.

Phanbuh informed that one of the initiatives taken up by the Commission was to engage young girls in leadership training. "It is high time for girl students to participate in these programmes," she said.

"There is a need to mobilize people at the community level, mostly the teachers, to come forward and lead. The Commission has a follow up routine as well," she added.

She informed that the Commission will go deep into the issue of increasing violence against women and will conduct a survey in this connection. "There are numerous cases that the Commission is being approached for, for instance, single mothers who are denied maintenance by their husbands, seek the Commission's help; the Commission has helped families reconcile as well," she said.

While mentioning that the Commission refers some cases to the Protection Officer if it is unable to solve them, Phanbuh bemoaned the lack of infrastructure. "We are overloaded, there is no investigative cell, counseling cell or legal cell," she said, adding that with the formation of such cells, cases will speed up.

On the issue of non prevalence of the cells, Phanbuh said, "The Government has expressed fund constraints."

On replying to a query as to why women chose to veil themselves, she said, "It is because of the stigma attached and they are reluctant to approach the police."

In this regard, State Women's Commission has been set up to help and provide the basic needs and counselling for women, Phanbuh said. In her message to women who are being abused but cannot come out publicly, she said, "I would like to encourage them to come forward."