

HUMAN RIGHTS NEWS UPDATE

By Civil Society Forum on Human Rights (CSFHR), Odisha

Contents

REPORTS

1. India Has just One Doctor for every 1700 people.
2. Demand for communal and targetted violence prevention bill at meeting of national integration council

NEWS

3. Corporate violence

- a) Odisha state Pollution Control Board nod to 15 Major Projects in state.
- b) Two worker injured in Iron Palnt in accident.
- c) Vedanta urges Odisha govt to persuade Nalco to sell surplus alumina for Jharsuguda smelter unit.
- d) Protestes against NTPC Project Continue.
- e) POSCO Project: Gopvt gives compensation to 32 villagers.
- f) Four injured in clash in POSCO Plant.
- g) POSCO Pays allowance to bettle vine workers.
- h) India: urgent call to halt Odisha mega- steel project amid serious Human Rights concern

5. Violation on Children's Right.

- a) Matric Board loses forms.
- b) Minor girl gangraped by lover and other fives. ..
- c) Four Juvenile escape from home in Berhampur..
- d) 43 Students fall ill after eat mid day meal in school..
- e) Mead Day Meal: Girl falls in vessel and dies in Odisha.
- f) Teenager Gang Raped in Odisha , two held.
- g) College girl raped by relatives in Odisha.
- h) Odisha: College Girl attacked in Jajpur.
- i) Man Kills Niece.
- j) Class II boy falls into boiling rice in Bolangir, critical
- k) SMS monitoring of midday meal: Why it will not end Odisha's horrors

6. Violation on Women's Right.

- a) Youth slits girlfriend's throat in Bargarh fores
- b) Parents burn daughter alive –whiff of honour killing as family opposed marriage.
- C) Youth held for posting morphed picture of girl on facebook.
- d) Man jailed for killing wife for dowry

- e) Odisha: Husband arrested for torturing teacher wife in Cuttack
- f) Nurse drugged, raped in Kendrapada
- g) Odisha man suspects wife's fidelity, slashes her private parts
- h) Man arrested for rape, murder in Odisha
- i) Accused in acid attack on girl nabbed from West Bengal.

7. NHRC/OSHRC Commissions Involvement Cases In Odisha.

- a) NHRC notice to state government on custody death
- b) NHRC summons top Orissa officials
- c) NHRC summons Odisha chief secretary

8 . SC/ST atrocities

- a) Deforestation deprives tribals of food security.
- b) Lower-castes still face difficulties.

India has just one doctor for every 1,700 people

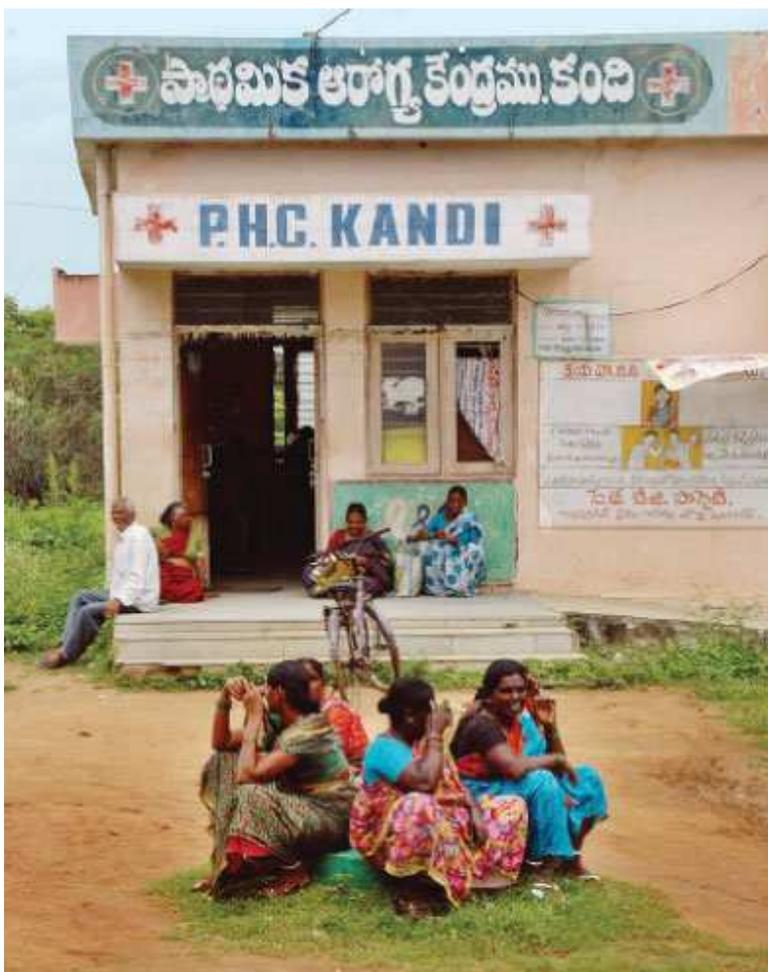
Last month, tragedy struck Bhargavi and Laisan Kanhar in Sambalpur district of Odisha. The tribal couple's only child Banita who was in Class III fell into a hot egg curry cauldron at her school in Girischandrapur village while she waited for the midday meal. The eight-year-old suffered severe burns and was rushed to the nearby primary health centre (PHC), where the only doctor was absent. The hospital staff applied first aid and referred her to the VSS Medical College and Hospital at Burla. However, there was no ambulance to take her to the hospital 72 km away. She finally reached there in a private vehicle nearly four hours after the accident. The same evening, she was again referred to the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, nearly 300 km away. By next morning, Banita was declared dead at the hospital in Cuttack. In July, Delhi-based freelance filmmaker Anand Bhaskar met a similar fate despite being in the heart of the national capital. By the time he was rushed to Safdarjung Hospital, via a trip to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), it was too late to save the 33-year-old who was electrocuted. He was not living in some back-of-beyond Odisha village, but in tony South Delhi.

For both, scarcity of doctors was an issue. Their lives couldn't be saved because they could not get the right treatment at the right time. Healthcare in India, whether it is in the country's capital or in the boondocks, is a nightmare. In fact, sufferers would say nightmare is an understatement. There is only one doctor per 1,700 citizens in India; the World Health Organisation (WHO) stipulates a minimum ratio of 1:1,000. While the Union Health Ministry figures claim that there are about 6-6.5 lakh doctors available, India would need about four lakh more by 2020—50,000 for PHCs; 0.8 lakh for community health centres (CHC); 1.1 lakh for 5,642 sub-centres and another 0.5 lakh for medical college hospitals. By any reckoning, it's a tall order, admits Union Health Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad.

THE RURAL RELUCTANCE

If shortage of doctors is one problem, their unwillingness to work in the rural hinterland is another, creating artificial scarcity in the area and high concentration in another, admit Union health ministry officials. One of

the first things that Azad tried to do after taking over as health minister was making rural posting for all government medical college pass-outs compulsory. But he failed to get the order implemented. “Despite the efforts of the government and incentives offered, medical students or doctors are not showing interest in working in rural areas. I wonder what is wrong with the doctor fraternity,” says Azad, implying that it’s no longer a “service” but a “profession”. But the doctors are not to blame either. Surveys of rural healthcare facilities have revealed poor infrastructure, non-availability of medicines, equipment and even the basics. When asked about the doctors’ reluctance to serve in rural areas of Andhra Pradesh, Dr Abhilash, former president of Andhra Pradesh Junior Doctors Association (APJUDA), says a doctor, who has specialised in a particular medical field like cardiac or neuro, cannot be expected to treat normal medical cases, which is best left for MBBS doctors. “We are not saying we won’t serve in rural areas, but before asking us to serve there, government should ensure there is necessary infrastructure in place.” Though the Andhra government had introduced compulsory rural service for PG doctors on completion of the course, APJUDA insists that the rule be uniform for all, as some private medical college students have gone legal to get exemption. Further, the bond of `20 lakh that a PG doctor has to sign is also being opposed. In rural areas and semi-urban areas of the state, there is scarcity of doctors and specialists besides an acute shortage of well-trained paramedical staff, including nurses. In 1,709 PHCs and 186 CHCs in Andhra, there were 140 band 322 vacancies respectively. The government admits the grim picture in the rural areas, despite the success of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM). Shortage of human resources is a distressing feature of India’s healthcare services. Even the Planning Commission has conceded that availability of healthcare services is quantitatively inadequate.



There are 1.48 lakh sub-centred, 24,049 PHCs and 4,833 CHCs functioning. The death of Rehima Bibi in Odisha’s Balasore district sums up how shortage of doctors takes its toll even in district headquarters. On June 2, Rehima was admitted to the district headquarters hospital (DHH) with complaints of acute diarrhoea. By evening, her condition began to

worsen. The nurse on duty rushed an SOS call to the doctor on emergency duty but he did not turn up. And when he eventually did, the woman had already succumbed. Gopinath Parida, the doctor on duty, put forth his predicament: “I was the only doctor on evening duty and had to attend to nearly 100 patients. Still, I went to attend to Rehima. She was suffering from very serious complications and also renal failure for which she could not survive.” Earlier last year, another woman from the same district almost lost her life soon after giving birth at a community health centre in Soro. With no obstetrician available at the CHC, a nurse conducted the delivery and in the process had allegedly cut the urinary tract of Jafirani Bibi and left it unstitched. The woman from a very poor family had to undergo a second operation to save her life. Cases like this abound as the healthcare sector grapples with an acute shortage of doctors in the hospitals across Odisha. The state, apart from the three government medical colleges and hospitals, has around 1,162 PHCs, 351 CHCs, 324 area hospitals, 30 DHHs, 26 sub-divisional hospitals and two apex hospitals, one each in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela. According to the Health and Family Welfare Department, more than 20 per cent of the posts of specialists and assistant surgeons in the peripheral hospitals from the PHCs, CHCs to the DHH level are lying vacant. Of the total 4,362 posts in the peripheral cadre for the primary and secondary level healthcare institutions, as many as 1,090 are vacant.

- There is only one doctor per 1,700 citizens in India; the World Health Organisation stipulates a minimum ratio of 1:1,000.
- There are 387 medical colleges in the country—181 in government and 206 in private sector. India produces 30,000 doctors, 18,000 specialists, 30,000 AYUSH graduates, 54,000 nurses, 15,000 ANMs and 36,000 pharmacists annually.
- Health ministry claims that there are about 6-6.5 lakh doctors available. But India would need about four lakh more by 2020 to maintain the required ratio of one doctor per 1,000 people.

Worse still, many doctors posted in the hospitals in the rural areas remain absent for long periods. And in the absence of doctors, patients visiting the healthcare centres are treated by stand-ins—pharmacists and even nurses. The situation in the medical college hospitals is equally grim. Though the SCB Medical College and Hospital at Cuttack is better off, the two others—VSSMCH at Burla and the MKCGMCH at Berhampur—are beset with shortage of doctors at all levels. While the shortage is attributed to low production of medical professionals in the state, with only six medical colleges till last year, there is a deep disinclination among the graduates to serve in rural areas even though they have to sign bonds with the government for mandatory three years service in the peripheral institutions. Karnataka, however, produces 1,200-1,300 MBBS doctors every year. But they refuse to serve in rural areas. While more than 30 per cent of the posts for general physicians and primary caregivers are vacant in PHCs, CHCs and sub-centres across the state, the vacancies are as much as 65 per cent when it comes to specialists and super specialists, says Sharanaprakash P Patil, Minister of Medical Education. According to the state health department, 1,148 posts for specialist doctors and 2,727 posts for doctors in state hospitals are lying vacant. “The issue is really serious as doctors are not willing to work in rural areas. There is no legislation in place to make it compulsory for them to work there. Last year, 90 per cent of the students who passed out bought their way out of the rural service,” he adds, referring to the penalty of `1 lakh for MBBS students and `5 lakh for postgraduates. State Health Minister U T Khader recently announced in the Assembly that the penalty has been revised. He told The Sunday Standard that the MBBS doctors will now have to pay `10 lakh and postgraduates `25 lakh if they decide not to practice in rural areas for a stipulated period of time. “The decision is pending with the Central Government. Once the rule comes into place, students will

have no choice but to work in rural areas,” he adds. The decision seems to be a far cry considering the speed of our delivery. But the immediate fallout is alarming. In Dakshina Kannada district, Yashoda, 23, who is suffering from a neurological disorder, attempts suicide if the monthly appointment with her psychiatrist is skipped even by a day. Imagine the ordeal the family undergoes in case the doctor is absent.



The no. of allopathic doctors registered with the MCI was 6.12 lakh in 2011. If 18-year-old M V Subrahmanya does not receive his psychiatric medication on time, he grows restless. If not engaged in some activity he explodes into a boiling rage and leaves a trail of destruction at his home. His father Mayya says while staring blankly at his son in his house in Hoovina Koppala near Kakkada in Dakshina Kannada. The nearest PHC in Kakkada does not have a psychiatrist, neither it stocks psychiatric drugs. Like Kunha Mugeru, Yashoda's father, nearly 60 to 70 people change buses to consult private psychiatrists in Puttur. Even the district's 160-year-old hospital does not have specialist doctors to deal with crippling deformities seen in 439 endosulfan sufferers in Kakkada. In a country where pizza reaches home before an ambulance, Nedungulam panchayat of Tamil Nadu is no exception. Nedungulam, under Vilathikulam Taluk, 50 km north of Thoothukudi, has nearly 7,000 inhabitants. Leave aside doctors and hospital, the 108 emergency ambulance service takes nearly 75 minutes to reach the village, allege villagers. In the absence of basic healthcare facilities, people travel at least 20 km to reach the nearest PHC at Vembar. According to villagers, many lives could have been saved had there been minimum healthcare facilities in the panchayat. Even basic drugs like paracetamol are not available there. Dr Bosko Raja, Deputy Director (Health), Kovilpatti Division, however, cites the norm of a population of 30,000 or more for setting up a PHC. At the start of 11th Plan, the number of doctors per lakh population in the country was only 45, whereas the desirable number is 85 per lakh population. As per rural health statistics 2012, there were 1,48,366 sub-centres, 24,049 PHCs and 4,833 CHCs functioning in the country. Forget about sub-centres, doctors are not available even in CHCs. Compared to requirement for existing infrastructure, there was a shortfall of 74.9 per cent of surgeons, 65.1 per cent of obstetricians and gynaecologists, 79.6 per cent of physicians and 79.8 per cent of paediatricians. Overall, there was a shortfall of 69.7 per cent specialists at the CHCs.

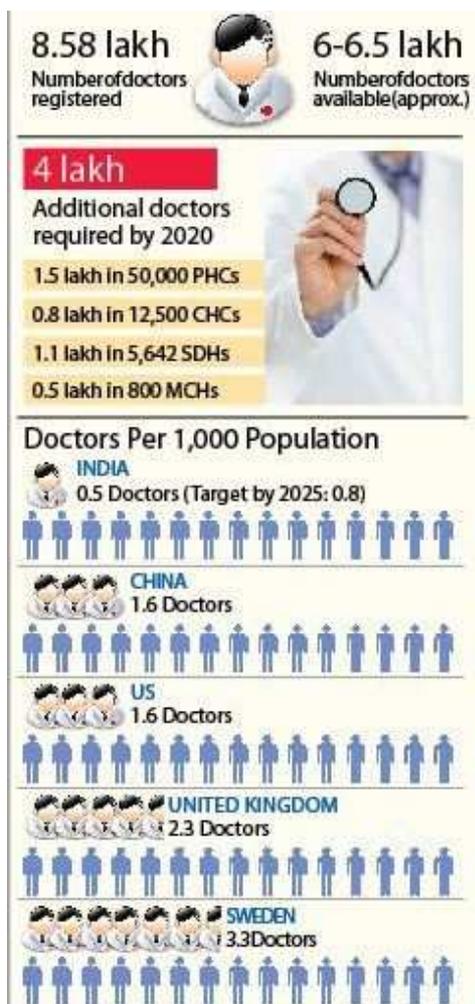
THE PATIENT RUSH

A trip to AIIMS in the national capital—the country's top most referral hospital—at emergency hour could be heart-wrenching, if not scary. According to official data, around 7,000 patients visit the OPD everyday from various states and the number of serious cases has to be added. In the year 2008-09, the number of new cancer patients coming from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar stood at 2,403 and 1,072 which has now gone up to 2,666 and 1,243, respectively. Little wonder that people in India now prefer to mortgage their land and gold

to avail healthcare in the private sector. With the Government spending on healthcare woefully inadequate, there's been a mushrooming of private sector hospitals, mostly high-end. It has not only put pressure on the common man's medical healthcare bill, but also strained the supply of doctors. There's a continuous flight of doctors to these better-paid and better-equipped private healthcare domains. This has led the private hospitals to cash in on the abysmal government health infrastructure. In Andhra Pradesh, patients are often shifted to private hospitals from the government hospitals, though there is no necessity for it; ironically, this is justified by the government doctors. Some of them very often refer the cases to their own clinics to make money. The condition is no different in neighbouring Odisha. The proliferation of private hospitals and nursing homes has, in fact, posed a major challenge for the government. With no restrictions on private practice, government doctors are being engaged by private hospitals as consultants. In the process, the government doctors posted in the rural areas, who also are consultants with private hospitals in towns and cities, are resorting to blatant absenteeism. A worried state government has now decided to take drastic action against the delinquent doctors. "Instructions will soon be issued to all private hospitals and medical colleges to appoint doctors as consultants or faculty members on the basis of no objection certificate from the government. They will be subjected to scrutiny and any violations will be judged seriously," state Health Secretary P K Mohapatra says.

FLIGHT OF RESOURCES

Today, India has the highest number of medical colleges in the world. This unprecedented growth has occurred in the past two decades in response to increasing health needs. There are 387 medical colleges—181 in government and 206 in private sector. India produces 30,000 doctors, 18,000 specialists, 30,000 AYUSH graduates, 54,000 nurses, 15,000 ANMs and 36,000 pharmacists annually. According to Medical Council of India (MCI) data, 31,866 new MBBS doctors were registered during the year 2009-2010 and 34,595 students were admitted in 300 colleges for the academic year 2009-2010. The number of allopathic doctors registered with the MCI has increased progressively since 1974, to 6.12 lakhs in 2011—which yields an adjusted ratio of one doctor for 1,953 persons. The shortage of doctors in government hospitals is also attributed to the factors such as preference to work in private hospitals, and study and work abroad. According to Union health ministry data, the present doctor-population ratio is 0.5 per 1,000 and the target by 2025 is 0.8 per 1,000. In the current scenario of doctor-population ratio, the number of doctors required in the rural areas was enormous and target of one-doctor-for-1,000 population cannot be met before 2020. After detailed inputs from various working groups, the MCI came to a consensus that the targeted doctor-population ratio of 1: 1000 would be achievable by the year 2031. According to the 12th Plan document, 6,91,633 physicians are available during the 11th Plan and expected availability for the 12th Plan by 2017 is 8,48,616 at annual capacity of 42,570 doctors.



Ironically, cellphone reaches the tribals in Tamil Nadu's hills, but not healthcare. At 1,800 metres in Siraikkadu forest of Western Ghats, mobile phones ring loud in the serene atmosphere but lack of access to healthcare facilities are taking a toll on the health of the inhabitants there. The worst-affected are women and children; most of them suffer from anaemia. Five-hundred metres down the hill, women of the 40 tribal families residing in the houses provided by the government also suffer from anaemia. The tribal hamlet has no transport facilities. In case of any health emergency, the people need to walk at least eight km to reach the nearby government hospital in Bodinayakanur. "Even in the government hospital, only if we go before 11 pm, the doctors would treat us," said women. The situation is even worse in Kurangani village and Bodimettu, a hilly area where the government health sub-centre remained close for more than a year. "Our five tribal hamlets depend on this health centre for treatment, but nurses come here rarely," bemoans women in Kurangani. "We don't even have a chemist shop here. The government hospital in Bodinayakanur is located nearly 25 km downhill," says Ramar (35), a daily-wager. According to hospital sources, of the total 16 doctors, only nine were working at present. "The doctors are supposed to come at 7.30 am, but they all come only around 8.30 am. Moreover, they don't stay till 12.30 pm," say the hospital staff. Several doctors of the Bodinayakanur Government Hospital run their private clinics.

RIGHT PRESCRIPTION

Faced with huge supply and demand gaps in the availability of basic health human resources, the Union health ministry did initiate several reforms. In just over four years, the availability of MBBS seats has gone up from 33,567 to 45,629. Similarly, the number of PG seats has increased from 13,838 to 22,850. The medical colleges at the six new AIIMS have started functioning with admission of 50 students each and hospitals are going to be made functional this year. In order to strengthen tertiary healthcare delivery in the government sector, the health ministry also took up 19 state government-owned medical colleges for

upgradation under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana. To incentivise doctors for rural postings, the health ministry said that 50 per cent of seats in PG courses would be reserved for government medical officers who have served in designated rural areas for three consecutive years and a weightage of 10 per cent marks given for each year of rural posting for national entrance examinations to the postgraduate courses. However, the response was not encouraging for doctors. Health ministry officials point out that based on 2001 Census adjusted for only qualified personnel, India has about 62 doctors, nurses or midwives per 1,00,000 today, and of these about 38 are doctors and 24 are nurses and nurse-midwives. In order to reach the international norm, we would, at the very least, require six lakh additional doctors and 12 lakh additional nurses. Joint Secretary in the health ministry Vishwas Mehta says, "We need huge number of doctors. Even if we are able to manage them in place, doctors will not work in rural areas. So we need to have mid-level healthcare professionals between Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) and doctor. There are already seven lakh ASHAs working in rural areas. That's why we are going ahead with the introduction of BSc (Community Health) courses soon." Currently 1.4 lakh sub-centres are being manned by ANMs designated with the functions of prenatal and antenatal care; educating the mothers about basic child healthcare etc. The proposed scheme of BSc (Community Health), which is also called the Bachelor of Rural Health Care (BRHC), is under discussion by the ministry for the last three years and already got the support from the state governments and the Planning Commission. Prof K Srinath Reddy, President, Public Health Foundation of India, said that the positioning of well-trained mid-level healthcare providers (MHPs) in the health system to provide essential primary healthcare to underserved populations was now a growing trend, especially in Africa and Asia but also seen in some developed countries. In India, there was need for MHPs to strengthen primary healthcare in both rural and urban areas. In fact, Assam has a three-year course to train a Rural Medical Practitioner for primary healthcare; the Assam Rural Health Authority Act governs this arrangement. Chhattisgarh had begun, and given up, a similar programme but over 950 Rural Health Assistants with such qualifications have been employed by the state government. West Bengal has begun the training of nurse-practitioners. Maintaining that lack of doctors and trained specialists, even nurses, is a huge problem, Mission Director of NRHM in Assam Prateek Hajela said the Assam government had introduced The Assam Rural Health Regulatory Authority Act, 2004 to provide for establishment of Assam Rural Health Regulatory Authority to regulate academic activities for imparting medical education and training at government as well as private sector. Jharkhand Principal Secretary Health K Vidyasagar says, "There are no short-term solutions to meet the immediate shortage of doctors. However, to meet the challenge, the first step we have taken is to increase the age of retirement to 65 years for all doctors, teaching and non-teaching. We are making efforts to increase the number of MBBS seats in the medical colleges and planning to set up new colleges in 300-bed divisional-level hospitals."

THE KERALA MODEL

In a country of pathetic healthcare facilities, Kerala shows the way. The state has the best coverage of medical care facilities in the rural sector. Even the remotest places and tribal hamlets have access to basic medical facilities, which makes the state different. In the state, the doctor-patient ratio of 1:700 is on par with most of the European countries. Indian Medical Association, Kerala, secretary Dr A V Jayakrishnan said there was no need to worry about the manpower. "Doctors are even available in the tribal areas," he says, adding that some doctors were reluctant to move to the rural areas. "It is not because the doctors are not willing to serve in rural areas. But it is only because of the want of basic facilities and amenities," he says. Jayakrishnan also claims that there are no vacancies for doctors both in the government and private sector. "Recently when applications were invited for 800 vacancies, about 5,000 candidates had applied for the post. But we have a shortage of specialist doctors in the state," he says. Kerala Government Medical Officers' Association president O S Syam Sundar says though the state had the best medical facilities when compared to others, some issues were yet to be addressed. "All the panchayats have at least one

PHC. But we have not increased the PHC with the increase in population. The main issue is that a single doctor might have to look after a larger population. There should be a scientific staff structure,” he says. In certain remote areas in Wayanad, Idukki and Kasaragod, the issue of non-availability of doctors can be seen, Dr Sundar says. This was only because the government has not addressed some of the genuine issues of the doctors working in the rural areas. As an HRD ministry report says, there would have been fewer casualties in the Bihar midday meal tragedy, had the children been provided treatment on time. The hospital where the children were taken to—after consuming poisoned food in Dharmasati village, Saran district, on July 16—did not have even rudimentary facilities. When the condition of the children deteriorated, parents and relatives desperately tried to move them to the district’s Sadar hospital but no ambulances were available. It took almost four hours to reach the hospital after snagging some private vehicles; meanwhile, more children died. The situation in Sadar hospital was so bad that children continued to die. It was late in the night that the district administration decided to shift the affected children to Patna Medical College Hospital. Four died on the way. Life is so cheap here.

(Source-<http://newindianexpress.com/magazine/India-has-just-one-doctor-for-every-1700-people/2013/09/22/article1792010.ece>)

DEMAND FOR COMMUNAL AND TARGETTED VIOLENCE PREVENTION BILL AT MEETING OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION COUNCIL

Kandhamal justice and Karnataka rising persecution of Christians raised; call for SC rights to Dalit Christians. The following is the text of the Statement by All India Christian Council Secretary General Dr. John Dayal in the meeting of the National Integration Council, held on 23rd September 2013 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi and presided over by the Prime Minister, Dr. ManMohan Singh. Dr. Dayal called for the enactment of a Communal and Targetted Violence Prevention Act. He also called for fresh investigation and trial of murder cases in Kandhamal in 2008, and Scheduled Caste rights for Dalit Christians. Dr. Dayal brought to the attention of the Prime Minister and the NIC the rising trend of persecution of Christians in the rural areas of Karnataka in recent months]. Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, Honourable Union Ministers, Chief Ministers and other Members. Greetings from my community and my organisation, the All India Christian Council, which was founded in 1998 in the wake of large-scale persecution of our community in several parts of the community at the hands of misguided fringe elements of a militant right wing fundamentalist and hyper-nationalist organisation that seeks to convert this secular democracy into some sort of a mono culture theocracy. Thank you, Prime Minister, Sir, for convening this meeting, but after such a long gap. A meeting of the NIC, of course, is not a panacea for the violence against, and general persecution of, religious minorities, Dalits, Tribals and other marginalised people. But frequent meetings – at least once a year would be the bare minimum – would send a signal to the victim groups that the nation at large, present here in the presence of the leaders of the Union and State governments, had not forgotten them, was deeply concerned about them, and was determined to end their trauma and restore them to a life of peace and happiness.

In recent days, I have once again witnessed the aftermath of targeted mass violence. I was part of a Fact Finding group organised by the Centre for Policy Analysis, which a week ago visited Muzaffarnagar, and in particular its villages, make-shift refugee camps, burnt out mosques and its despairing people. Earlier, at a People’s Tribunal in Bangalore, victims and witnesses told us of the widespread persecution of Christians in the villages of Karnataka since 2008, attacks on small and home churches and the molestation of women, which was continuing. Muzaffarnagar and Kandhamal, Odisha, in 2008 have striking parallels – the spread of violence to the villages through a sustained hate campaign carried out by extremist political vested interest, and the involvement of politicians. Anti-Christian violence is also visible in Andhra,

Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and specially Madhya Pradesh. Karnataka is now reporting an anti Christian acts of violence every third day. In all cases, the police look on passively, or was itself complicit in the violence. Senior officers chose to remain deaf to the warnings of growing communalism and tension, and imminence of violence. Both Kandhamal, 2008, and Muzaffarnagar, 2013, saw large scale mattacks on places of religious worship in the villages. There was massive internal displacement, with village upon village purged of all presence of the minority communities. Police and governance systems were found wanting before, during and after the violence. In both cases conditions in refugee camps were dismal and inhuman. And in both cases, killers and fomenters of violence roamed about free, taming both victim and police. Kandhamal has also seen a gross miscarriage of justice and extremely tardy and incomplete rehabilitation and reparations. In 32 of the murder cases – the total according to the survivors is more than 100 – there have been only two convictions. An MLA accused in nine of these cases and convicted in one is roaming free on bail in a highly questionable judicial decision. It is no surprise therefore to go through the agenda of this meeting of the NIC, and learn from it that there has been a steady rise in recent years in the number of communal violence cases, and the number of dead and injured. We learn there were 640 cases of actual violence and 716 of communal tension in 2012, which left 2012 killed and 2,129 injured across the country. In the nine months of 2013, we have already seen almost 490 cases of violence and 433 cases of tension, with 152 injured. These are including the separate figures given for Assam and the North East. These figures do not reflect the cases of anti Christian violence. The police for their own reasons do not register them under the “communal” heading. These call for urgent action. Short term response from the government and long term correctives which have still not been put into place after more than six decades of experience with communal violence need to be devised and activated,

SUGGESTIONS:

1. The long-term solution is to have a comprehensive and effective Act against Communal and Targetted Violence, which favours the victim and has a national Code to standardize the current Relief, Rehabilitation and Reparation. Impunity must end, and officials must be held accountable. I was part of the last exercise under the National Advisory Council to formulate such a Bill. I was a witness when the draft Bill was targetted and all but destroyed in the last meeting of the NIC by some States and political leaders. The Union government did not intervene at any stage to disclose its mind. Civil society feels this Bill is imperative if communal violence and its aftermath are to be averted, and victims rehabilitated with human dignity. The Bill was not against any particular community. Nor was it meant to encroach on federal values. With the protection of victim at the centre, and as the reason, of its theme and jurisdiction, Civil Society is willing to listen to governments and other stakeholders to devise an acceptable version of the Communal and Targetted Violence [Relief, Rehabilitation and Reparation Bill] which is implementable and which will punish the guilty and hold police and civil officials responsible for their actions, or their failure to act. It is also important that:

2. The guilty are arrested, including those who were part of the hate campaign by spreading rumours and false information through posters, word of mouth and social media

3. Government identify and prosecute and stop those involved in communalizing and radicalizing innocent people, specially in the villages by perverted concepts of identity formation.

4. Government Provide adequate and well equipped and well trained police with arms and communication equipment and transport in communally sensitive villages. There must be some code of postings to ensure that police are biased in favour of their own community.

5. Government ensure Rapid action police at block level
6. Government hold village panchayat leaders culpable for communal violence in their region, and hold block and district senior officers of the police and administration, similarly, responsible for the occurrence of communal violence.
7. At the state and national level, police reforms and training continue to be a work in progress, and progress is exceedingly slow. Ensure commensurate presence of minority and marginalised in police forces.
8. In Muzaffarnagar, ensure government takes over all relief camps and makes them humane with adequate security, medical relief especially for women and children including newborn babies, with adequate provisions and sanitation. The survivors must understand they are under the government's protection and care.
9. Ensure that detailed FIRs are registered and the crimes investigated painstakingly with adequate modern forensic scientific methodology, supervised by senior police officers, and tried in special courts so that justice is swift. There must be witness protection in place.
10. Every internally displaced person must be resettled in his or her home village with a sense of security and compensated adequately to rebuild his and her home and life. If required, employment must be provided. Special care must be taken for the rehabilitation of women victims of gender violence.
11. In Karnataka and other states, ensure that violence against Home churches, Pastors and others is registered and investigated as an act of communal violence.
12. In Kandhamal, ensure fresh investigation of all murder cases by trained investigating officers, followed by fresh trials of these cases. Witness protection systems must be put into place to reassure victims and survivors. Government must also help survivors rebuild their lives, and provide jobs to those now forced to work in distant places as casual labour.

The Christian community has been distressed at the government attitude to their demand that Dalit Christians be given the same rights as are given to Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh Dalits. In affirmative action, there cannot be any discrimination on basis of religion. Government must issue an ordinance to remove Article 341 Paragraph 3 as soon as possible. Government must also ensure an end to the so called Freedom of Religion Acts in some states which encourage extremist and fundamentalist elements to harass, torment and persecute innocent Christians.

Thank you

Dr. JOHN DAYAL
John Dayal

Odisha State Pollution Control Board nod to 15 major projects in State

The Consent Committee of Odisha State Pollution Control Board recently gave its consent to major projects while rejecting the proposals of Bhusan Steel and National Enterprises. The

Consent Committee granted or recommended to grant consent to 15 project proposals. It, however, rejected proposals of Cold Rolling Mill of 3.5 lakh tonne per annum capacity and Galvanised Steel of 2.25 lakh tonne per annum and Colour coated steel of Bhusan Steel Limited, an integrated steel plant located at Meramundali, Dhenkanal. Meanwhile, due to non-compliance of orders of the OSPCB, the Bhusan plant has closed down. Hence, the Committee recommended deferring the case till the existing unit complies with the conditions of the OSPB. Similarly, the proposal of National Enterprise to enhance production of iron ore from 410000 tonne per annum to 448728 per annum from its mine was rejected by the Committee. However, the Committee asked the company authority to submit the mining plan for the enhanced capacity. On the other hand, Odisha Power Generation Corporation and 14 others were granted consent order of the Board. OPGC proposed developing coal mines of 8 MTPA along with coal washery of same capacity at Manoharpur in Sundargarh district. The Committee allowed consent subject to conditions of obtaining Environmental Clearance (EC) as per Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006. Another major proposal of Nalco for bauxite ore production of 6.825 MTPA over an mining lease area of 1315.362 hectares including forest land of 1294.282 hectares at Panchapatmali, Bhejpur in Koraput district was granted consent. The Committee while according consent asked for supportive documents for drawing water and others. The proposal of Joda East Iron Ore Mines of TISCO for expansion of railway siding to handle capacity from 6 MTPA to 11 MTPA at Joda in Keonjhar district was also given nod by the Committee. The railway siding is connected with the main line of Murgamahadev -Bansapani line. Adhunik Metaliks Ltd (Kulum Iron Ore Mines) proposal to enhance production of iron ore from 1,20,000 MTPA to 4,14,000 MTPA with 2x150 TPH Crusher and Screening Plant was passed subject to conditions of obtaining of EC and Forest Clearance. Similarly, proposal of Fly Ash Light Weight Aggregate with capacity of 0.5 MTPA and Producer Gas Plant of Jindal Steel and Power Ltd, located in Nisha in Anugul district and proposal of Shiva Cement Ltd to enhance cement capacity from 0.115 MTPA to 0.825 MTPA and Clinker capacity from 0.132 MTPA to 1.05 MTPA were also cleared by the Committee. The Committee approved proposals of Mahagiri Chromite mines of IMFA Ltd at Kaliapani in Jajpur district, Pro-Minerals Pvt Ltd at Basantpur in Keonjhar, Emami Paper Ltd in Balgopalpur in Balasore, POL terminal for storage of petroleum products of Indian Oil Corporation Ltd at Malimunda in Jharsuguda, for enhancing production of iron ore of Rungta Sons Pvt Ltd at Orahgat in Sundargarh, similar proposal of K C Pradhan, Paredipada Iron and Manganese mines in Keonjhar, Sukinda Chromite Mines of TISCO.

(Source-

http://www.steelguru.com/indian_news/Odisha_State_Pollution_Control_Board_nod_to_15_major_projects_in_State/324730.html)

Two workers injured in accident at iron plant

JHARSUGUDA: Two workers were injured at Action Ispat & Power Ltd near Jharsuguda's Marakutta village on Monday, when hot waste coming out of wet scrubber tower of the kiln fell on them. Sources said around 11.10am, the hot waste in the kiln got jammed. The victims, Abhimanyu Bhainsa, 30, of Pandripathar and Janardhan Meher, 28, of Marakutta village suddenly opened an outlet resulting in the accident. Abhimanyu sustained around 90% burn injuries but Janardhan managed to escape with minor ones. Abhimanyu has been referred to IGH Rourkela. Soon after the incident, plant workers stopped work and had a scuffle with

security guards and shift in-charge. They demanded that company bear all medical expenses of the injured. "It was an unfortunate incident. We are making all arrangements to shift the injured to IGH Rourkela as soon as possible. As the worker is covered under ESI Acts, all necessary facilities will be provided as per the law till he resumes work," senior general manager (HR & admin) of the company L R Bhati said.

(Source-<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhubaneswar/Two-workers-injured-in-accident-at-iron-plant/articleshow/22954103.cms>)

Vedanta urges Odisha govt to persuade Nalco to sell surplus alumina for Jharsuguda smelter unit

Bhubaneswar: Vedanta Aluminium Ltd (VAL) seeks intervention of Odisha government to persuade the National Aluminium Company's (Nalco) to sell surplus alumina for VAL's Jharsuguda smelter unit. The company, which recently suffered a huge setback to its Rs 40,000-crore mining proposal in the Niyamgiri Hills following its rejection by tribals on forest rights issue at Palli Sabhas, mentioned to the Government that the deal would help generate extra revenues for the Nalco the tune of Rs 200 crore annually. "We earnestly request you to please impress upon Nalco to start selling or allow participation of smelter/companies located in Odisha (specially SEZ) which would be treated as deemed exports for Nalco in their alumina tenders..." the company's letter to the State Government said. The company pointed out that the Odisha Mining Corporation's (OMC) noncompliance with the MoU signed with the VAL to supply bauxite for its Lanjigarh alumina refinery has put its Jharsuguda aluminium smelter "at great risk". Referring to resumption of operations at the Lanjigarh refinery following a gap of eight months, the VAL stated that the smelter is in operation by importing alumina. "The 12-lakh-tonne-a-year smelter (SEZ unit) is ready for commissioning but cannot be started due to non-availability of alumina," the letter said. The VAL pointed out that it is yet to receive a reply from the Nalco about its proposal to purchase its surplus alumina by participating in its tendering process. Presently Nalco is exporting surplus alumina, mostly to global commodity giants, to the tune of over 1 million tonne per year. Meanwhile, the State Government has sought comments of the Nalco Chairman on the suggestion of the VAL, sources said.

<http://www.orissadiary.com/ShowBusinessNews.asp?id=43755>

Protests against NTPC project continues

Even as the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Thursday laid foundation stone of NTPC's proposed 4,000 MW super thermal power project at Lara village in Chhattisgarh's Raigarh district, thousands of people here protested the project. They held dharna at Kanaktura Chack. Villagers from 13 gram panchayats led by Sarpanch of Attabira Sanjib Pradhan demanded cumulative Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report and joint public hearing with the State Government. The villagers accused the Union Government and Chhattisgarh Government of not taking them into consideration while giving clearance to NTPC to go ahead with the project. They pointed out that while the project will benefit the people of Chhattisgarh, they will have to bear the pollution generated by the plant. The spot at Lara where the NTPC is coming up with the 4000-mw power plant at an investment of Rs 14,000 crore is hardly one km from the border. On Monday, two groups of villagers, one comprising 13 Sarpanch, 13 Samiti members, and villagers apprised the Collector of their plan to stage demonstration against the project.

(source-<http://newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/Protests-against-NTPC-project-continues/2013/09/20/article1793367.ece>)

Posco project: Govt gives compensation to 32 villagers

KENDRAPADA: The state government on Friday disbursed compensation amount of Rs 8.64 lakh to 32 betel vine workers at the proposed Posco plant site in Noliasahi village in Jagatsinghpur district. The money was given by the Posco authorities. "The district administration enlisted 171 betel vine workers of Noliasahi for monthly compensation amount of Rs 2,250 for a year. On Friday, 32 workers received compensation for 12 months, that is, Rs 27,000 each. Other betel vine workers will get their due soon," said Jagatsinghpur collector S K Mallick. The betel vine workers have been demanding compensation for the last three years. Jibanlal Behera, one of the beneficiaries, said, "We are happy to get the compensation. However, the fate of at least 5,000 betel vine workers of Dinkia, Nuagaon and Gadakujang gram panchayats still hang in balance after the authorities dismantled vineyards for the proposed project. We hope the administration and Posco will provide compensation to all betel vine workers soon."

(source-http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-09-02/bhubaneswar/41687780_1_posco-project-jagatsinghpur-district-noliasahi)

Four injured in clash over Posco work

KENDRAPADA: The pro and anti-Posco villagers on Friday clashed, leaving many injured. Trouble started in Jagatsinghpur's Noliasahi village when a large number of villagers, including women, stalled trench digging work, demanding compensation and rehabilitation. "Four persons were injured in the violence," said IIC of Abhayachandrapur police station Anirudha Routray. The situation is under control, he added. At least 400 villagers gathered at Noliasahi with some even filling up the dug trench to prevent authorities from building the boundary wall, said Upendra Behera, a villager of Noliasahi. The villagers gheraoed Abhayachandrapur police station, demanding action against the staff of the construction company alleging that they were attacked by them. The anti-Posco group is firm on stopping boundary construction. "We are yet to get compensation for the 2,000 acre acquired two years back. We will stop the work," said Bijaya Swain, a betel vine worker of Noliasahi. General secretary of Posco Pratirodha Sangram Samiti (PPSS) Sishir Kumar Mohapatra said a private company owned by a senior BJD leader is trying to build boundary wall in a clear nexus with officials and police. Jagatsinghpur collector S K Mallick said, "The Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation of Odisha (Idco) is constructing the boundary wall with the help of a private company. We have already handed over 1,703 acre of land to Idco."

(source-http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-09-07/bhubaneswar/41853671_1_posco-work-boundary-wall-bijaya-swain)

Posco pays allowance to betel vine workers

Photos



Women stand near the stems of trees chopped for the proposed \$12 billion steel plant by Posco at Noliashai in Jagatsinghpur district of Orissa. (AP)

Three years after demolition of betel vines in Gadakujang panchayat, Posco company disbursed subsistence allowance to the labourers of betel vines at Noliashai on Friday. Sources said 1,100 betel vines were demolished and Rs15.93 crore disbursed to 993 people of Nuagaon and Gadakujang panchayats. After demolition of betel vines, hundreds of labourers were living in pathetic condition while many migrated to other States in search of jobs. Similarly, women betel vine labourers are working as domestic servant in different officials' quarters in Paradip. Despite demonstrations and rallies, Posco delayed to identify the labourers which held up payment of subsistence allowance. Jagatsinghpur Collector Satya Kumar Mallick had directed Posco authorities to expedite the identification of labourers otherwise he threatened not to cooperate in expediting the company's steel project work. Subsequently, Posco with the cooperation of villagers of Noliashai identified 172 betel vine labourers and paid Rs 27,000 to each labourer towards one year's subsistence allowance. On Friday, 32 beneficiaries received their allowance and the rest would get their allowance on September 2. The labourers will get other two years' allowance gradually.

(source-<http://newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/Posco-pays-allowance-to-betel-vine-workers/2013/08/31/article1760944.ece>)

India: Urgent call to halt Odisha mega-steel project amid serious human rights concerns

GENEVA (1st October 2013) – Construction of a mega-steel plant in Odisha in Eastern India should be halted immediately, United Nations independent human rights experts* have urged, citing serious human rights concerns. The project reportedly threatens to displace over 22,000 people in the Jagatsinghpur District, and disrupt the livelihoods of many thousands more in the surrounding area.

“The construction of a massive steel plant and port in Odisha by multinational steel corporation POSCO must not proceed as planned without ensuring adequate safeguards and guaranteeing that the rights of the thousands of people are respected,” the group of eight experts stressed.

While India has the primary duty to protect the rights of those whose homes and livelihoods are threatened by the project, the experts underlined that “POSCO also has a responsibility to respect human rights, and the Republic of Korea, where POSCO is based, should also take measures to ensure that businesses based in its territory do not adversely impact human rights when operating abroad.”

The UN independent experts brought their concerns to the attention of both Governments and the corporation involved following allegations of human rights abuses and potential negative human rights impacts linked to the project.

“Forced evictions constitute gross violations of human rights,” said the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Raquel Rolnik, “and may only be carried out in exceptional circumstances and in a manner consistent with human rights law, including after a genuine consultation, without leaving people homeless or vulnerable to further human rights violations.”

The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter, warned that the forcible removal of people from their lands could be tantamount to depriving them of their means of subsistence. “People who would be evicted for the POSCO project have relied on their lands for generations in order to obtain adequate food and sustain themselves and their families,” he said.

“People should not be impoverished in the name of development; their rights must take precedence over potential profits,” stressed the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Magdalena Sepúlveda. “Projects such as these, with such a large potential impact on the rights of people living in poverty, must not go ahead without the meaningful participation, consent and involvement of the community affected.”

The Special Rapporteur on water and sanitation, Catarina de Albuquerque, pointed out that “nearby Indian residents’ access to safe drinking water and sanitation must be guaranteed and prioritized ahead of the water required for large-scale investment projects.” The POSCO steel project would withdraw every day an estimated 38 million litres (10 million gallons) of water from the water sources that supply the nearby cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar.

According to the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and association, Maina Kiai, “people in the project-affected area have reportedly been subjected to violence, harassment and intimidation, as well as arbitrary detentions and false charges, as a result of their activities to assemble peacefully and collectively defend their human rights.”

“Respect for human rights requires transparent and accountable institutions and governance as well as the effective participation of all individuals and civil society, who are an essential part of realizing social and people-centred sustainable development,” the UN Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, Alfred de Zayas, noted.

“People who live in villages around the plant and derive their livelihood from the surrounding forest land have repeatedly expressed their concerns regarding damage to the forest area,” said the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health, Anand Grover. “People’s right to live in a healthy environment, an integral part of the right to health, may also be at stake due to the plant, but their protest against it has been disregarded.”

States have primary obligations to ensure the enjoyment of human rights within their territories. This includes the duty to protect against human rights abuse by third parties, including business enterprises. “We call on the government of India to live up to its ‘duty to protect’ and suspend the POSCO project while the alleged human rights concerns are being examined and addressed,” the experts said.

They also urged POSCO to exercise human rights due diligence throughout all stages of their activities, to ensure meaningful consultations with potentially affected stakeholders, to carry out a human rights impact assessment and to act on and incorporate its findings into the project operations in order to avoid, mitigate and ensure remedy for any potential or actual human rights impacts, as required by the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

“We are encouraged by our initial dialogue with the Government of the Republic of Korea regarding this issue, and we urge the Government of India to respond to our concerns to ensure that the human rights of the affected people are fully respected and protected,” they said.

“In entering into investment agreements and promoting business activities, States must respect their duties under international human rights law,” the UN independent experts stressed. “Unless full compliance with international human rights standards is ensured, the project should not proceed as planned.”

(*) The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and extreme poverty, Magdalena Sepúlveda; the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Raquel Rolnik; the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter; the UN Special Rapporteur on the human right to water and sanitation, Catarina de Albuquerque; the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai; the UN Independent Expert on the promotion of an equitable and democratic international order, Alfred de Zayas; the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health, Anand Grover; Working Group on

the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, Pavel Sulyandziga (Chair).

Adequate housing: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Housing/Pages/HousingIndex.aspx>

Right to food: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Food/Pages/FoodIndex.aspx>

Extreme poverty: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Poverty/Pages/SRExtremePovertyIndex.aspx>

Water and

sanitation: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/WaterAndSanitation/SRWater/Pages/SRWaterIndex.aspx>

Freedoms of association and

assembly: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/AssemblyAssociation/Pages/SRFreedomAssemblyAssociationIndex.aspx>

International order: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IntOrder/Pages/IEInternationalorderIndex.aspx>

Right to health: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Health/Pages/SRRightHealthIndex.aspx>

Business and Human

rights: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Business/Pages/WGHRandtransnationalcorporationsandotherbusiness.aspx>

Check the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human

Rights: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf

Check the UN Guiding Principles on Human Rights and Extreme

Poverty: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Poverty/Pages/AnnualReports.aspx>

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UN Human Rights Country Page – Republic of

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Watch “20 years of human rights - the road

ahead”: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XDHX5fkxFg&feature=share&list=UU3L8u5qG07dPUwWo6VQVLA>

Matric board loses form

KORAPUT: Scores of people returned disappointed after failing to get application forms for an Odia language test from the Board of Secondary Education's (BSE) zonal office at Jeypore on Saturday. Though the board conducts the test, the zonal office did not have the forms. The BSE, through newspaper advertisements, had announced that forms for the test will be available at its zonal offices, including

Jeypore. The last date for submission of form is October 7. Students from English-medium schools, who have not studied Odia as a subject, have to clear the test to be considered equivalent to qualifying Class VII in Odia-medium schools. "After seeing the advertisement, I came from Rayagada to get a form for my daughter but officers told me that forms were not available and I shall have to download it from the official website. Unnecessarily, my entire day was spoiled," said Prem Kumar Santosh Roy. "If the forms are not available at the Jeypore office, it should not have been listed in the advertisement. It caused immense hardship to us," said Bidyadhar Chowdhury of Koraput. Officials at the local zonal office said the head office had not supplied them the forms. Deputy secretary of BSE zonal office in Berhampur Subash Chandra Behera said, "Due to shortage of staff at Jeypore office, forms were not supplied as the officials would have faced problems in selling those. People, who need the form, can download it from our website." Behera offered no comments when asked why were the candidates asked to come to Jeypore to collect the forms when those could be downloaded. Also the zonal office, which functions from Government Girls High School at Jeypore, is in a complete mess. The office has no permanent staff, no furniture, no telephone connection, no drinking water, no security guard and not even a sweeper. Only two staffers on deputation from BSE Berhampur office are managing the show. Admitting to the mess, Behera said, "It will take time to streamline the Jeypore office." The branch was set up on October 7, 2011, to decentralize the board's activities. At least 625 schools, involving 24,000 students of Koraput, Nabarangpur, Malkangiri and Rayagada, are under its jurisdiction.

(Source-http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-09-29/bhubaneswar/42501847_1_jeypore-zonal-office-forms)

Minor Girl gangraped by lover and five others in Odisha

Bhubaneswar: A minor girl was allegedly kidnapped and gang-raped by six persons, including her lover, for four days in Odisha's Cuttack district, police said today. The incident came to light yesterday when the girl reported the matter to the police after escaping from the secluded house, where she was confined, atop a hill at Bindhnima village in Cuttack district. Later, the police have arrested one Litu Behera, the victim's lover while five others were absconding. According to the FIR lodged by the 17-year-old girl, she was in a relationship with Behera, a tractor driver, who also lived in the same village.

(Source-<http://www.indiatvnews.com/crime/news/minor-gangraped-by-lover-and-five-others-in-odisha-3711.html>)

Four juveniles escape from home in Berhampur

Berhampur (Odisha): At least four inmates of the Government-run observation home for the juvenile delinquents here allegedly escaped from the home last night after attacking security guards, police said. Police have registered a case in this regard after a guard in the duty lodged FIR about the incident. Four inmates allegedly escaped from the home by assaulting the guard in duty. "We have registered a case and started investigation on the incident," said inspector-in-charge, BN Pur police station Deepak Mishra.

While police could manage to nab one of the four, three others were still at large, police said. The escaped inmates were housed in the observation home in connection with dacoit and murder cases in different places. While three of them hailed from Berhampur and nearby areas, the other one was from outside Ganjam district, sources said. "We have received a report about the escape of the four inmates after assaulting the staff from the in-charge superintendent of the home G. Sharmila," said district women and child welfare officer Sabita Beura. The incident would be inquired, she said. Around 96 inmates were housed in the home before the incident took place.

(Source-http://www.odishatoday.com/viewnews.php?news_id=5557)

43 students fall ill after eating midday meal in school

BERHAMPUR (ODISHA): At least 43 students today taken ill after consuming midday meal at a primary school at Aska in Ganjam district, about 45-km from here, official sources said. All the students were admitted at the Aska hospital immediately and two of them referred to MKCG Medical College and Hospital here as their condition deteriorated due to dehydration, the sources said. A two-member team of pediatrician team from Berhampur rushed to Aska hospital for treating the affected students, said Sub-collector, Bhanjanagar Sudhansu Mohan Samal. All the affected students were in good condition, he said. Around 140 students of the Tile Factory Upper Primary School, near Aska consumed the midday meal. Soon, the students developed diarrhoeal symptoms and began vomiting and liver pain, said Block Development Officer Aska Balaram Mallick. The food was prepared by a local women self-help group (SHG), the BDO said.

(Source-http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-08-31/news/41642280_1_midday-meal-aska-affected-students)

Midday meal: Girl falls into vessel, dies in Orissa

A tribal girl, who fell into a pot of egg curry while the mid-day meal was being served in her school on Saturday, succumbed to burn injuries at a hospital in Cuttack on Sunday morning. Banita Kanhar, a class III student of Girischandrapur Kalyan Sevashram in Jujumara in Sambalpur, Orissa suffered over 70 per cent injuries. "Since egg is served once a week, children were too eager to have it and fell over each other to be served first," said Prashant Kumar Mishra, headmaster of the school. Banita was taken to a local primary health centre, shifted to the VSS Medical College and Hospital in Burla, and then to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack as the Burla hospital did not have adequate treatment facilities for burn patients. There have been several incidents over mid-day meal scheme in Orissa over the last few months. Early this month, a dead lizard was found in the mid-day meal at a primary school at Hinjili in Ganjam district. In July at least 39 students fell ill after consuming food, contaminated by a dead scorpion in mid-day meal in Dhenkanal district.

(Source-<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/midday-meal-girl-falls-into-vessel-dies-in-orissa/1160009/>)

Teenager gang-raped in Odisha, two held

Bhubaneswar: Two men were arrested on Wednesday for the gang-rape of a 17-year-old girl in a forested hilly area in Odisha's Cuttack district, police said. The girl was kidnapped on Sep 6 by the two men from her home at Bindhanima village, 100 km from state capital Bhubaneswar.

The men kept her in an abandoned hut, where four others joined them and all six of them raped her for three days, Tigriria police station officer-in-charge Tapan Kumar Rout said. Police swung into action after the victim escaped with the help of some villagers and lodged a complaint on Tuesday. "We have arrested two of the attackers. Efforts are on to nab the four others," Rout said.

(Source-http://zeenews.india.com/bbv/teenager-gang-raped-in-odisha-two-held_875752.html)

College girl raped by relative in Odisha district

A 17-year-old college girl in Odisha's Jajpur district was allegedly raped and assaulted by her brother-in-law, the police said today. The victim hailing from Sansailo in the district had gone for shopping to the market with her brother-in-law sometime last week when the crime took place. Her family members found the girl admitted at the Sukinda Community Health Centre, the police said adding the incident came to light after the victim's father lodged a complaint yesterday. According to the FIR filed at the Sukinda police station, Baruna Mohanta (32) of Samantarapur village came to visit his in-laws on September 10 and took the victim to the nearby market for shopping, Tofan Gagh, inspector-in-charge of Sukinda police station,

said. Later, the accused admitted the girl to the health centre in a critical condition with deep wounds on her head and legs. He called up his in-laws and asked them to come to the hospital. Baruna reportedly told doctors that the girl had fallen down from the car when the door opened accidentally. The victim's family shifted her to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack. The girl received serious injuries on her head and back. She could not say anything about the incident for a couple of days. The victim's father, however, filed a complaint alleging that his daughter had been raped and thrown out of the car by his son-in-law. The police have registered a case and started an investigation. "We have registered a case under sections 376 and 307 of the IPC against the accused on the basis of the complaint. The victim is still not in a condition to say anything but she is improving. We will record her statements in a day or two," Tofan Gagh said.

(Source-http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/college-girl-raped-by-relative-in-odisha-district-113091900801_1.html)

Odisha: College girl attacked in Jajpur

Jajpur (Odisha): A college girl in Odisha's Jajpur district was attacked and left injured while she was returning home after participating in a protest rally over rape of another girl of nearby college, police said today. The injured girl, a second year arts student of Sukinda college in the district, was attacked by sharp weapon yesterday afternoon while waiting for a bus on the side of National Highway-200 along with her classmates, police said. She was admitted to the local government hospital and later shifted to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, they said. The girl was attacked by an unidentified youth from behind who fled away after attacking her. Tension prevailed in the areas as the news spread. Agitating students of Sukinda college supported by the locals blocked Duburi-Sukinda NH -200 at Baghapokhari square demanding immediate arrest of the accused. Hundreds of vehicles were left stranded on both sides of the road over three hours. The blockade was withdrawn after local tahasildar and police assured the agitators of arresting the accused soon. Notably, the students took out a rally after a girl student of local Baji Rout memorial college was kidnapped and later raped in Anantapur-Botalanda forest on Thursday.

(Source-http://odishatoday.com/viewnews.php?news_id=5355)

Man kills niece

A 28-year-old man killed his one year and five months old niece in Tarata village under Nemalo police station limits on Monday morning. The accused, Ashok Behera alias Bhaskar, beheaded his elder brother's daughter Liza with a chopper a few metres from his house. Her father Niranjan Behera said Ashok took Liza from his wife in morning and went to the banana plants grown on Karandia canal embankment where he committed the crime. Locals caught Ashok and informed police. Salepur SDPO Surya Kant Ray, who conducted the preliminary investigation into the case, said the accused has confessed to the crime. Police said Ashok was repeatedly asking his brother for a long time to intervene in his marital problems as Ashok's wife had left him two years back and was staying with her parents. As Niranjan turned a deaf ear to him, Ashok decided to retaliate. The body of the child has been sent to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack for post-mortem. Further investigation is on. Rs12 Lakh Looted from Traders .Balangir: Four businessmen of Kantabanji in the district were robbed of Rs 12 lakh near Mundodarha Chowk under Belpara police limits while they were returning from Patnagarh on Sunday. The businessmen, Akash Agrawal, Sunil Agrawal, Kishan Sharma and Nabin Mishra, were returning in a Maruti van after making their weekly collection from Patnagarh. A group of 10-12 dacoits had blocked the road by felling trees. When the van of the businessmen stopped, they broke its glass windows and took it to the forest. After attacking the businessmen, the dacoits snatched their money bags and fled to Khaprakhol area. One of the businessmen Sunil Agrawal was admitted in Belpara CHC as he sustained serious injuries in the attack of the dacoits. Police are investigating the case.

(Source-<http://newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/Man-kills-niece/2013/09/10/article1777029.ece>)

Class II boy falls into boiling rice in Balangir, critical

BHUBANESWAR: No lessons have been learnt from the death of the Class III girl who succumbed to burn injuries after falling into hot dal in her school in Sambalpur district on last Saturday. Within days of the tragic incident, a Class II boy sustained severe burn injuries after falling into boiling rice cooked for midday meal (MDM) in Balangir on Thursday afternoon. The incident happened at Sihini High School near Titilagarh around 2 pm when the students were playing on the school premises. The boy, identified as Rahul Chhattar, was first taken to Titilagarh sub-divisional hospital with 40% burn injuries. He was later shifted to Balangir district headquarters hospital as his condition worsened. Titilagarh block development officer (BDO) Md Ishaq said the condition of the boy was critical. "We are bearing all his medical expenses. At the time of incident, the headmaster of the school was absent. Disciplinary action will be initiated against him if he is found guilty of neglecting his duties. The school does not have a proper kitchen. Midday meal is cooked at a make-shift shed," the BDO added. Recently, school and mass education minister Rabi Narayan Nanda told the assembly that over 10,930 schools didn't have kitchen sheds to cook MDM. "The incident is unfortunate. Whosoever is guilty will be taken to task," the minister said on Thursday. Titilagarh Congress legislator Surendra Singhbhoi blamed the state government for "failing to monitor the implementation of the midday meal scheme properly."

Earlier this week, Class III student Banita Kanhar of a tribal residential school at Girischandrapur in Sambalpur died of burn injuries after she had fallen into a vessel of hot dal.

(Source-http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-08-30/bhubaneswar/41617785_1_balangir-midday-meal-class-ii)

SMS monitoring of midday meal: Why it will not end Odisha's horrors

By Sandeep Sahu At a surface level, the idea looks unexceptionable. The operation of the mid day meal (MDM) scheme in nearly 70,000 schools in Odisha would be monitored in real time through an SMS based mechanism in a phased manner. But scratch a little deeper and the great new idea does not quite look like it would put an end to the horrendous happenings on the MDM front that are being reported from schools across the state. The project, to be facilitated through the SMS gateway of Odisha Computer Application Centre (OCAC), a state government undertaking, would require headmasters of all schools in the state to send SMSes on a daily basis on the number of students who eat mid day meals, the menu and the like. A specially developed software will automatically filter out anomalies in the information provided by the principals and generate an automated report, officials involved with the project say. If the headmaster of a school sends false reports for three days consecutively, an automated report will be sent for evaluation directly to the Director, School and Mass Education department. Teachers are seething at the new initiative, which would add one more burden on their already overburdened shoulders. Reuters While this would certainly be a big improvement on the earlier system of monthly reporting, there is no way it can keep tabs on things that have a critical bearing on the incident-free running of the scheme: grossly unhygienic conditions in which food is cooked and served; rotten, fungus-infected food being served to children; every conceivable insect from lizards to snakes falling into meals and – hold your breath – children themselves falling into cooking cauldrons and dying! On August 24, Banita Kanhar, a tribal class III girl student of Girishchandrapur sevasharm school in Sambalpur district fell into a pot containing piping hot egg curry served as Saturday special to students, sustained 70% burns and died in the SCB medical college in Cuttack the next day. As if to prove that it was not a rare, one-off incident, a class II student in a school in Balangir district got severely burnt after falling into a large pot containing water strained from cooked rice barely five days later. In the month and half since 23 school children were killed after

consuming a meal turned poisonous in Saran district of Bihar, there have been at least 10 incidents in Odisha of students being taken ill and hospitalised after eating food stuff contaminated by insects or use of spurious material. These are the kind of things that the government needs to keep tabs on – and not whether 'ghost' children eat mid day meals and if headmasters make money while running the MDM scheme as the SMS based monitoring seeks to do. "In due course, we will develop a mechanism for these things too. But a beginning has to be made somewhere," explains an official closely involved with the project involving monitoring of MDM through SMS. But pressed a little further, the official conceded that even in its fully developed form, the system cannot prevent an incident like the one at Harishchandrapur village. There are other imponderables as well. Given the state of mobile networks in rural Odisha, how foolproof can an SMS based monitoring system be? "In case of such a problem, the headmaster can always get in touch with the block office where there are data entry operators, who can pass on the information to the monitoring centre in Bhubaneswar through the internet," the official quoted above, who would rather not be named, offers by way of a solution. But sceptics point out that internet connections at the block level are perhaps in an even more dismal state than the mobile networks. In any case, generation of data, in itself, amounts to precious little if it is not acted upon, points out Tapan Padhi, a Bhubaneswar based activist. "Who is to ensure that it is acted upon and who is to be held accountable if it is not acted upon?" asks Padhi. Teachers are seething at the new initiative, which would add one more burden on their already overburdened shoulders. "To file this kind of information, the headmaster not only has to do a head count of the students while they are having their meal on a daily basis, but also supervise the entire process from the handing over of the ration to the serving of the meal. If that is what the government wants us to do, it might as well free us of all our other responsibilities, including the minor one of teaching," says the headmaster of a school in Bhubaneswar. His solution: a variant of the direct cash transfer scheme whereby parents of school children are given money for their children's meal in place of the current system of serving cooked meals in the school. All available indications from the ground suggest that what the headmaster in Bhubaneswar says echoes the views of the overwhelming majority of teachers across the state. The government would do well to heed their opinion in the matter. While gadget based fancy schemes are all very well, they cannot go very far if accountability is sought to be fixed only on the teachers.

(Source- http://www.firstpost.com/india/sms-monitoring-of-midday-meal-why-it-will-not-end-odishas-horrors-1089605.html?utm_source=ref_article)

Youth slits girlfriend's throat in Bargarh fores

SAMBALPUR: A 26-year-old youth slit his girlfriend's throat and left her in jungle to die near Nrushinghanath temple in Paikmal area of Bargarh district. Locals later rescued her and admitted to hospital. Doctors at the VSS medical college and hospital conducted operation on her on Sunday night. They described her condition 'stable'. Paikmal police said they are looking for the boy, Anant Chhuria of Kumbhari village of Bargarh district, who is suspected to have committed the crime. "The girl is not able to speak. She wrote down the name in a paper," police said. Preliminary inquiry revealed the 20-year old girl, a student of a nursing school in Nuapada district, had come to Nrushinghanath temple on Sunday. "The locals had seen them moving at Kapildhar up above the spring near the temple in the afternoon. After some time they heard the girl screaming for help. They rushed to the place and found the girl in a pool of blood. She was immediately taken to the local hospital and shifted to the VSS medical college at Burla," Parul Gupta, sub-divisional police officer (SDPO), Padmapur, said. "We are searching for the boy," the SDPO said adding a case was registered based on the girl's written complaint.

(Source-http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-09-10/bhubaneswar/41936075_1_paikmal-bargarh-burla)

Parents burn daughter alive - Whiff of honour killing as family opposed marriage

ELIN KUMAR MALLICK



Local people protest against the alleged honour killing at Balakati on Friday. Telegraph picture

Bhubaneswar, Sept. 20: An 18-year-old girl was burnt alive today allegedly by her parents at Balakati on the city outskirts. The victim, Uma Bharati Mallik, a native of Balasore, had eloped with her neighbour four months ago and married him against her parents' wishes. Local residents detained Radha Gobind Mallik, 42, and Santilata Mallik, 40, of Betagadia village of Balasore district and later handed them over to police. Nigamananda Mallik, 28, alias Mantu and Uma had run away from home in June and got married in a local temple. They had been staying in a rented house at Balakati for the past two months. Preliminary investigations revealed that Mantu had been married before and has a one-year-old son. "The family was opposed to their relationship. After they had eloped, villagers used to ridicule the girl's parents, which might have enraged them and led them to resort to such a step," said a senior police official. The police said Santilata, who had been talking to Uma on phone for the past few days, visited the couple's rented house yesterday and urged them to return to their village. She had reportedly agreed to solemnise a formal marriage ceremony. "Her father reached Balakati this morning and asked Mantu to arrange an autorickshaw to go to the nearest bus stop from where all of them would leave for the village. When Mantu went out looking for an autorickshaw, the girl's parents allegedly poured kerosene on her and set her afire. To ensure that the victim could not scream for help, they had allegedly stuffed a towel in her mouth," said the police. Local resident Pramod Behera, who saw smoke billowing from the house, rushed to the spot, said: "As I entered the house, I saw the girl had been set on fire and her mouth was gagged. I ran out to fetch water and poured it on her." Several villagers gathered at the house and detained the two accused. With 90 per cent burns, Uma died on the spot. Later, her body was sent to Capital Hospital for autopsy. "It looks like a case of honour killing. Her parents have been arrested and investigation is on," said deputy commissioner of police Nitinjeet Singh. The incident sparked tension in the area with the local residents allegedly manhandling the girl's parents as well as the police personnel. One of their neighbours said the newly-wed couple had been living in an under-construction rented house for the past two months. "Both of them had approached me for accommodation. They shared a good relationship and appeared very happy together. Mantu was working as an electrician in our area," said house owner Sarat Chandra Mohapatra.

(Source-http://www.telegraphindia.com/1130921/jsp/frontpage/story_17373456.jsp#.UkFgINLWX4c)

Youth held for posting morphed picture of girl on facebook

Photos



The accused Gautam Pandit (centre). (Express photo)

The Crime Branch on Thursday arrested a 23-year-old youth for uploading objectionable pictures of his former girlfriend whom he had been pressurising for marriage for quite sometime. Gautam Pandit, a native of Balasore's Soro, was arrested by a team of the Cyber Crime Police Station from Rourkela where he is currently employed. He has been charged with stalking, circulation of obscene pictures, forgery, criminal intimidation and acts that insult the modesty of a woman. He was produced before the SDJM, Balasore later in the day. Sources in the Crime Branch said Pandit had apparently an affair with the girl who later broke up with him. However, the youth did not relent and kept pressurising her for marriage. He even issued threats. Later, he allegedly created a fake Facebook ID of the girl and uploaded objectionable pictures by morphing them. When the girl's family lodged a complaint with the local police, the youth tendered an unconditional apology and vowed not to repeat the mistake. However, instead of mending his ways, Pandit kept harassing the girl and posted morphed pictures to tarnish her reputation. When the matter was brought to Cyber Police Station, a case was registered and he was arrested. Pandit has been booked under Sections 292/ 354D/465/469/506/509 of the Indian Penal Code read with Section 66-A/66-C/67 of the Information Technology (Amendment) Act 2008. Such instances of cyber crime have been on the rise and Crime Branch has detected at least five cases of posting of morphed pictures on various websites and social networking sites this year alone. School and Mass Education Minister Rabi Narayan Nanda too had become a victim when an ITI graduate of Jeypore posted his morphed pictures on the internet. "Although we have been receiving complaints and acting on them, many victims still are not turning up. We would like them to use the help of Cyber Police Station which has technical expertise to track down the perpetrators," Additional Director General of Crime Branch BK Sharma said.

(source-<http://newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/Youth-held-for-posting-morphed-picture-of-girl-on-facebook/2013/09/13/article1782561.ece>)

Man jailed for killing wife for dowry

A man was sentenced to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment for killing his wife for dowry in Kanchipada village in Simulia police station in Odisha's Balasore district. Additional District Judge of Balasore R K Sahu pronounced the punishment for 32-year-old Bibhuti Mallik of Kanchipada village for killing his wife Laxmipriya Mallik. He was awarded 10 years of rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Rs 3000 and in default to pay the fine to undergo another 3 months of jail term. According to the prosecution, Laxmipriya was subjected to continuous torture by her husband for more dowry. With his persistent demands not being met,

Bibhuti hit her with a heavy wooden stick and she died on April 3, 2005. He was arrested after Laxmipriya's father lodged a complaint, sources said.

(Source-http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/man-jailed-for-killing-wife-for-dowry-113090401074_1.html)

Odisha: Husband arrested for torturing teacher wife in Cuttack

Cuttack: A man was arrested from Abhinav Bidanasi area under Markat Nagar police station of Cuttack city for allegedly beating and torturing his wife, who works as a teacher in a Government school. On the basis of a written complaint filed by the lady teacher, the Mahila police arrested Chandrakant Sarangi under sections of IPC yesterday. Sarangi was sent to jail after his bail plea was rejected. Quoting the FIR, police said the couple had married 12 years ago and they have a seven-year-old son. Teacher Jayanti Rath in her FIR has alleged that instead of doing anything for a living, Chandrakant operates her bank debit card and takes possession of her entire salary. "He often returns home late in inebriated state and beats me up picking up silly matters and even questions on my character, the FIR said. It was alleged that on August 16, Chandrakant attacked Jayanti with a stick and seriously injured her after she had blocked her debit card, police said adding that Jayanti had reported the matter at Markat Nagar police station on the same day.

(Source-http://odishatoday.com/viewnews.php?news_id=5365)

Nurse drugged, raped in Kendrapada

In yet another case a man was arrested on Monday for allegedly drugging and raping a nurse at a private clinic in Garapur area on the outskirts of Kendrapara town.

The 33-year-old victim, a widow in a complaint with the Kendrapara Sadar police on Sunday, Sept 22, alleged that she was raped three days ago after being given food laced with sedatives, the sources said.

The 52-year-old married man, Shiba Prasad Acharaya, who stayed in the neighbourhood had taken nude photos of the victim on his mobile phone and had threatened to make them public, they said.

He was sent to judicial custody after his bail was rejected by a local court.

(Source-<http://www.sahasamay.com/regional-news/others-news/676537748/child-dies-of-snakebite-nurse-raped-kendrapada-odisha.html>)

Odisha man suspects wife's fidelity, slashes her private parts

Bhubaneswar, Sept 30: A man in Odisha, suspecting his wife of infidelity, allegedly tonsured her, slashed her private parts with a blade and stabbed her with a tubelight. The man has been arrested, police said Monday. The gory incident occurred in the state capital Bhubaneswar Sep 24, but came to light only after the critically injured woman's brother lodged a police complaint. According to the victim's brother, Ranjan Panda, 40, who runs a tent house had been torturing his wife Jasoda for dowry since they got married in 2005. He also accused his wife of infidelity. On Sep 24 night, Panda came home in an inebriated condition and forcibly gave some sedative to his wife. When she dozed off, he tonsured her head, slashed her private parts with a blade, and stabbed her with a tubelight, he said. Later, Panda attempted to stitch her wounds, but when things got worse, he took her to a private hospital and fled after getting her admitted. Panda has been arrested, a police officer told IANS. The critically injured victim was undergoing treatment in a hospital.

(source- <http://news.oneindia.in/india/odisha-man-suspects-wifes-fidelity-slashes-her-private-parts-1315682.html#infinite-scroll-1>)

Man arrested for rape, murder in Odisha

Bhubaneswar: A man was arrested Friday in Odisha's Cuttack district for the alleged rape and murder of a 25-year-old woman earlier in the week, police said. Accused Durga Prasad Das, 32, allegedly intercepted the woman on her way back home to Tarito village, 40 km from Bhubaneswar, Sunday evening. He forcibly took her to a secluded place and raped her. When she protested, he hit her with a stone killing her, Cuttack Superintendent of Police (rural) Gurudash Kundu told IANS. Das dumped the body in a nearby canal. The body of the woman was spotted a day later by her relatives. Her father had also filed a missing complaint with the police. According to police, the accused and the victim were from the same village and were known to each other. Das had proposed to the girl a number of times but she always rejected him. Police said they were investigating whether any other person was involved in the crime.

(Source-<http://www.mizonews.net/nation/man-arrested-rape-murder-odisha/>)

Accused in acid attack on girl nabbed from West Bengal

The man, who had allegedly thrown acid at a girl in Badanaukana village under Rajnagar police limits, was arrested by local police from West Bengal. After committing the crime on September 6, the accused, Alekha Mandal, had fled to Bausagoda village under Khejuri police limits in West Bengal. Tracking his mobile phone, police nabbed him on Friday from Bausagoda where he was staying with one of his relatives, said Kendrapara SP Rabi Narayan Behera. A team of police led by Biranchi Bag, IIC of Rajnagar, camped in Purba Medinipur last week to nab him. Police have also arrested Bhanu Das of Sailendranagar village under Rajnagar police limits on the charge of helping the accused flee. Mandal admitted before police that he threw acid at 22-year-old girl when she spurned his marriage proposal. She suffered 50 per cent burn injuries and is currently undergoing treatment at the SCB Medical in Cuttack. Mandal was reportedly running a private clinic in Charakala village without even holding a medical degree and the acid used in the crime was sourced from his clinic. He was produced in a local court which remanded him in judicial custody and ordered to seal his clinic.

(Source-<http://newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/Accused-in-acid-attack-on-girl-nabbed-from-West-Bengal/2013/09/22/article1797395.ece>)

NHRC notice to state government on custody death

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has served a show cause notice on Chief Secretary asking why compensation would not be paid to the family of Ajay Kumar Biswal of Balasore district who was taken into custody and found dead in November 2011. Biswal (48) of Iswarpur village under Nilagiri block was found dead in a paddy field, a few metres from Iswarpur police outpost on November 24, 2011, a day after he was picked up by the police for interrogation in connection with a woman harassment case. While the police claimed that he committed suicide after fleeing from the outpost, Biswal's family members alleged that he was thrown in the paddy field after he died due to torture in the police custody. In March, the State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) had sought a report from Balasore Collector and SP on direction of the NHRC. The instruction came after a petition was filed with the NHRC by human rights activist Akhand. Akhand had moved the NHRC seeking fair probe, action against the guilty cops and compensation of Rs 10 lakh to the victim's family. The victim's family members have demanded Crime Branch probe into

the incident. The NHRC has issued the notice to the Chief Secretary on the basis of the report of the Sub-Collector. Seeking a reply in four weeks, the Commission has asked why the victim's family would not be paid compensation for loss of life.

(Source-<http://newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/NHRC-notice-to-state-government-on-custody-death/2013/09/14/article1784075.ece>)

NHRC summons top Orissa officials

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has summoned Orissa chief secretary to Delhi this month following its findings that labourers working in the betel vines that were demolished for the proposed steel plant site of Posco did not receive any compensation or unemployment allowance as announced in the rehabilitation package. In a letter to the Orissa government on August 27, the NHRC asked the state chief secretary to be present for a discussion on the subject on September 23 along with the state home secretary, law secretary and SC/ST department secretary and Jagatsinghpur district collector. Last month, following the visit of its special rapporteur Damodar Sarangi to the project area, the commission issued an order observing that the rehabilitation package does not provide any relief to agricultural labourers or share-croppers who will lose their livelihood due to acquisition of agricultural land. It also stated that of the 3,578 affected families, only 466, whose houses stood on government land, were identified as displaced families. "The remaining 3,112 families also deserve relief," the order stated. The NHRC started probing the matter following a complaint lodged by a Delhi-based NGO in 2007 alleging poor compensation to labourers at the betel vines as well as selection of lesser number of beneficiaries for the rehabilitation package. Orissa government has acquired 2,700 acres for the Posco's proposed 12 million tonne steel plant in Jagatsinghpur district.

(source-<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/nhrc-summons-top-orissa-officials/1166508/>)

Deforestation deprives tribals of food security

Large scale felling of trees in Chhatardandi, Mahakhand and other forest areas that were once famous for high quality teak trees in the State has affected the food security of tribals and landless people who mostly depend on collection, processing and marketing of non-timber forest produce (NTFP). Every day more than 1000 cycles loaded with wood come to the town from the forest. People also transport the wood in trains. Even as the Forest Department claims that Balangir district has 23 per cent of its total geographical area under forest cover, the satellite survey of 1989 puts the figure at 12 per cent. Going by the rate of deforestation, the figure may have come down to single digit. Apart from agriculture, the forest has been an important source of livelihood for the poor particularly the tribal communities and women in the district. According to an estimate, more than 30 per cent of the population depend on forest for livelihood. The NTFP provides multiple benefits in terms of food, fibre, fodder and firewood. Fruits, flowers, roots, shoots and seeds are the main sources of food for the poor people. Large scale deforestation, policy restrictions on free access to forest and increasing commercial exploitation of the forest products have resulted in non-availability of such products for them. In earlier famines, the tribals and the marginalised section of the society were able to survive because of the availability of forest products. They depended on forests for revenue earning NTFP products varying from Mahua flower to Tol, Kusum, Char seed, wild Tulsi and Kendu leaves. The major forest areas of Kiribanji, Chhatardandi, Harishankar, Khujen, Raju and Patharchepa have been degraded. Many areas of these forests appear as fields. The forest depletion has also created environmental and ecological problems in the area. The region, which had unending stretch of lush green forest less than 50 years before, has now converted into barren land mass. Noted ecologist and

economist Ghansiram Panda said, "Deforestation has several negative effects on the environment of the district including climate change and the worst impact is loss of habitat for hundreds of species. As trees help in perpetuating the water cycle, failure of this process will turn the land into barren deserts." Talking about the steps taken to prevent cutting of trees, Balangir District Forest Officer (DFO) Abhiram Nayak said, "We are doing our best to conserve the forest involving locals and the Department concerned by promoting awareness on forest protection to maintain ecological balance and ensure food security of tribals and poor people." He further said the officials regularly visit the forest areas to take stock of the situation. Besides, disciplinary action has been initiated against two range officers and four supporting staff facing charge of dereliction of duty, he added.

(Source-<http://newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/Deforestation-deprives-tribals-of-food-security/2013/09/13/article1782517.ece>)

Lower-castes still face difficulties

Neema looks to be in her 30s and is in love with a Muslim boy whose name she is too shy to reveal. She works in Delhi and suffers under two apparent disadvantages. She is a Dalit woman, the lowest in India's caste pyramid, and she walks with a pronounced limp. When she was in her early teens her grandmother, a housemaid in the neighborhood, handed her over to my family for safekeeping and grooming. But, sooner than expected, Neema declared she was getting married to a boy from her community, in her village in Partapgarh. The marriage broke up in no time. She was beaten and abused by the man who she said was a vagabond and a drunkard. Neema walked out of the marriage but now there is this Muslim boy from Allahabad who likes her and with whom she has a chat on the phone every day. They met in our ancestral village in Rae Bareli where Neema would routinely travel with my mother who loved her like her own child. After my mother's recent passing, Neema has been distraught. She has lost her most enduring anchor and her own family would not allow her to marry a Muslim boy. If she defies them, she would be thrown out of her village and the community would disown her. She would be an outcast, which is not without its own irony. A Dalit girl battered by a man of her community to be declared an outcast if she was to marry a Muslim. Two facts are evident here. Large swathes of Muslims are becoming the new untouchables in India, deemed lower in the social hierarchy than the Dalits. Their social marginalization in Gujarat, for example, appears more or less complete. The other point evident from Neema's story is that Dalits, who under Bhim Rao Ambedkar strove for a separate identity from their caste Hindu tormentors, are being insidiously wooed or driven to "become" Hindus. In fact, the shuddhi karan or purification has been a keystone for religious revivalism now afflicting India on a large scale. The campaign is seen as a foil to the Dalits' traditional turn to Islam, Christianity or Buddhism where they were at least offered the illusion of being less shunned. A greater challenge to Hindu revivalism comes in the endeavors of Christian missionaries whose successful social work among India's sizeable tribespeople is the envy of the Hindu right-wing. The brutal murder of an Australian missionary and his two sons, who were burnt in their jeep by a mob of Vishwa Hindu Parishad activists in the forests of Orissa in 1998, is a case in point. Murderous anti-Christian violence in the Kandhamal district of Orissa subsequently bears witness to this jostling for inflating numbers, part of India's tryst with universal adult enfranchisement. Neema's story, of course, offers only part of the explanation for communal clashes in India

(Source-<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/commentary/the-china-post/special-to-the-china-post/2013/09/13/388769/Lower-castes-still.htm>)

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