

Press Note
State Police Headquarters
Odisha, Cuttack
25th April, 2015

In the recent past, there has been a pan-Indian trend of increase in assault against women and minor girls, including in Odisha. The trend is extremely disturbing and shameful for any civilized society. This calls for serious introspection by one and all.

An analysis of the recent sexual assaults which took place in the month of April, 2018 in Odisha was made and to our utter surprise we found that out of all the cases of sexual assaults on minor girls reported so far, in 92.5% cases the offenders were either relatives/acquaintances of the victims or known to them and belongs to the same local community. This makes it very challenging for police and it is extremely difficult to prevent such occurrences.

A Holistic approach of prompt investigation, arrest of accused persons and early filing of charge sheets followed by close monitoring of prosecution and increase in the rate of conviction shall be a great deterrent. The criminal justice system needs to be geared up in order to meet these challenges. The rate of conviction, as per available judgement copies, has increased to 38.5% in 2018 from 17% in 2017. This could be possible due to increase in quality of investigation and close monitoring of prosecution during trial.

This problem can also be mitigated by launching a massive awareness campaign in the society involving all stake holders like Police, appropriate agencies of administration, NGOs, Community organizations, Civil society, teaching community in the educational institutions from primary to college level at the same time.

The response of the Criminal Justice System has to be robust and effective in order to instill a sense of security and confidence amongst the mass and also its ability in dispensing justice by bringing the culprits to book and giving them stringent punishment, as per law of the land.

Police is part of the criminal justice system along with prosecution and judiciary. Earlier several guidelines and instructions have been issued from time to time by CB for thorough and professional investigation into the cases of sexual assaults and clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) have been laid down for police officers investigating into such crimes.

However, keeping in view the recent rising trend of sexual assaults on minor girls, a comprehensive review was made by DGP to further sharpen police action and to address the daunting challenge. A video conference with all SsP/Range DIsG/IsG along with senior staff officers was taken by DGP on 24.04.2018 in State Police Headquarters, in which a threadbare discussion was made on the recent sexual assault crimes and a comprehensive strategy was evolved to combat the pervading menace.

Elaborate and exhaustive instructions have been issued by DGP to the SsP/ Range IsG/DIsG to bring a sense of "URGENCY" with a "HOLISTIC APPROACH" with deadline for the Investigating Officers and Supervising Officers at all levels to comply with. "Urgency" means; (1) promptitude in registration of cases on receipt of complaint written/oral irrespective of jurisdiction, (2) Medical examination and recording of statement of victim

u/s. 164 CrPC within 24 hours, (3) promptitude in investigation and arrest of accused persons & (4)expeditious trial of the cases in the Court while closely following of trial by appointment of Special Public Prosecutors and Holding Investigating Officers.

In all the sexual assault cases reported, in about 70% cases accused were arrested within 24 hours and at the same time, without any delay in other cases.

Detailed instruction have also been issued for foolproof and quality investigation and making the case watertight in the court of law for ensuring conviction.

DGP stressed upon coordination and synergy at horizontal level i.e. investigators, supervisors, prosecutors as well as at vertical level i.e. Police Station, SDPO Office, SP Office, IUCAW, Range Office and Crime Branch.

The POCSO Act 2012 mandates that trial of such cases should be completed within one year. SsP/DCsP have also been impressed upon to coordinate with the prosecutors for expeditious trial which will help in achieving convictions at the earliest, which in turn will have the deterrence against perpetrators of such barbaric crime.

Our commitment and endeavour is to make Odisha one of the most leading & Model states in combating this menace, in our country.

In the end, it is reiterated that safety and security of our children, women and all vulnerable groups remains our top priority.

It's time for all to introspect and make efforts to rid the society of this menace. Today, a self proclaimed godman has been pronounced guilty in a case of rape of a minor. This shows the extent to which the society has fallen, but at the same time the silver lining of the dark clouds is that the criminal justice system has brought the guilty to book.
