

## SC/ST Commission Visits Deceased Dalit Sisters' Home

MORADABAD | DEC 30, 2010

Chairman of the SC/ST Commission today visited Kothiwal Nagar here to take stock of the situation after two Dalit sisters were charred to death allegedly by a mob on December 18.

P L Punia, the chairman of the Commission, talked to the victims' relatives and summoned the District Magistrate, DIG, SP (city) and Circle Officer (city), Moradabad, to appear before the Commission on January 10.

"The case of the Dalit sisters being burnt was an open case of murder, while the local administration has tried to mould the case into that of an accident or suicide," Punia told *PTI*.

He said in a similar case of crime against Dalits in Delhi, the Police Commissioner had summoned the Deputy Commissioner of Police and Secretary, Social Welfare, R K Srivastava, who was arrested after ignoring the summons.

On a question on the status of Dalits in India, Punia said that while the position of the Dalits is not satisfactory in any state, it is the worst in Uttar Pradesh, even though the state's Chief Minister Mayawati belongs to the Dalit community.

The Moradabad case of atrocities against Dalits is "horrible", he said, adding, it shows the status of the Dalits in the state.

Talking about the facilities available to the SC/STs, Punia alleged the funds for the benefit and uplift of SC/STs are being diverted to works like development of roads, medical colleges and even the Commonwealth Games.

Reservation was also not providing good jobs to those belonging to the backward castes, Punia said.

The Commission has started an awareness campaign to make Dalits aware of their rights, he said.

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### **Probe ordered into burning of Dalit girls**

Moradabad: The National Commission for Scheduled Castes on Tuesday asked the district administration to probe the death of two Dalit sisters who were allegedly burnt alive by a mob in Kothiwal Nagar area here.

Addressing media persons after meeting the family of victims Gita (22) and Monu (20), Commission member Raju Parmar said the victim's mother Rajo had earlier requested the police and the district administration to provide protection to her house or place them at a secure location as she feared for their lives, but it was not provided to them.

He pulled up the authorities for not providing security to the family.

“After the incident, we were told that no representative of government or district administration visited the mother of the deceased,” he said.

A probe has been ordered into the incident, he added.

According to Rajo, a mob gathered outside their house on December 18 and set it ablaze. While she escaped unhurt, her daughters were burnt alive in the fire.

The mob was protesting the murder of a woman and her 10-year-old daughter for robbery on December 9, in which the victims' brother Rakesh, who worked as a sweeper here, was an accused. He is absconding and his brother Rajesh was arrested, police said.

Mr. Parmar said the police initially refused to register Rajo's complaint although she had identified 12 people who were part of the mob.

The accused has to be arrested immediately, he said.

The Commission would conduct a probe into the incident if the district administration failed in this regard, Mr. Parmar said. - PTI

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## Rs 1.5 lakh for Dalit girls' mother

**Express news service** Posted online: Wed Dec 22 2010, 00:31 hrs

**New Delhi :** Two days after the Moradabad police said that the suspected mob killing of two Dalit girls in Kothiwal Nagar was a "suicide", the city magistrate has awarded a compensation of Rs 1.5 lakh to their mother. Senior officials also assured the agitating Valmiki community of a fair probe. The probe will now be headed by Assistant SP and Circle Officer (Civil Lines) Vinod Kumar Singh.

The compensation announcement came after the issue threatened to snowball, with over 1,400 safai karamcharis of Moradabad starting an indefinite strike. After the announcement of the relief, the strike was called off.

The National Commission for Scheduled Castes, led by known Mayawati baiter P L Punia, too got into the picture and sent a team to Moradabad on Tuesday. Punia told The Indian Express: "Officials of the district administration and the police are responsible for the death of the Dalit sisters. Our team has conducted an inquiry, and the commission would get a case registered under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act against erring officials according to the findings. The girls were killed, it was not a case of suicide."

Geeta (25) and Neetu (22) were allegedly burnt alive inside their house by a mob on Saturday. The girls' brothers were named in the murder of a local trader's wife and eight-year-old daughter, and they had been facing constant taunts and threats from the neighbourhood.

A case has been registered against the trader whose wife and daughter were killed, Pankaj Gagneja, and seven others for murder and under various sections of the SC/ST Act.

On Tuesday top officers met the mother of the girl, Rajkali, and assured her that the matter was being taken up at the highest level.

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## Dalit girls' death: It was murder, not suicide, say panels in chorus

**Express News Service** Posted online: Wed Dec 22 2010, 01:57 hrs

**lucKnoW** : The teams of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis, which visited Moradabad on Tuesday to inquire into the deaths of two Dalit sisters on Saturday, said the girls were killed, and blamed the local officials for the tragedy.

Both the teams rejected the district administration's claim that the girls had committed suicide, unable to bear the taunts of neighbours after their brothers were booked in a case of double murder.

The NCSC team was led by member Raju Parmar while Swaraj Jeevan headed the NCSK team.

NCSC chairman PL Punia told The Indian Express, "The officials of the district administration and the police are responsible for the death of the Dalit sisters. Our team has conducted an inquiry and the commission would get a case under the SC/ST Atrocity Act registered against erring officials according to the findings. The girls were killed and it was not a case of suicide."

Jeevan said, "We conducted an inquiry and found that the mother of the victims had been requesting senior officials of the police and the administration for security since December 9. She feared attack on her and her daughters, but the officials hurled abuses at her and shooed her away from their offices."

He further said, "It is a case of murder and I am recommending action against the District Magistrate and the DIG of Moradabad, holding them responsible for the killing of two Dalit girls and getting a false case of robbery and murder fabricated against the Dalit girls' brothers Rakesh and Rajesh."

Both the teams visited the house in Kothiwal Nagar where the charred bodies of Geeta and Neetu alias Monu were found and recorded the statement of their mother who was present in the house at the time of the incident. The teams also spoke to their neighbours.

Later, the teams met the doctors who conducted the postmortem examination of the two girls, and the forensic experts who had examined the room. They also recorded the statements of the local SHO, the Circle Officer, the SP (City), and the City Magistrate who had visited the spot on December 18.

Parmar and Jeevan met the DIG and the DM and inquired about the steps they had taken in the matter.

Moradabad DIG Ashok Kumar said he gave all details to the members of both the commissions and replied to their queries. "The investigation would find out if the mother's allegation that Geeta and Neetu were set ablaze by a mob is true," the DIG said. He said the police had already registered a case under various sections of IPC and the SC/ST Act and an Assistant SP was conducting the investigation.

Rajjo Devi had alleged in her complaint that a mob entered her house and set her daughters ablaze after outraging their modesty.

Her sons, Rajesh and Rakesh, were arrested after Pankaj Gagneja, who lives in the same locality, had lodged a complaint, naming them for the murder of his wife Pooja and daughter Sania, and robbery at his house on December 9.

While Rajesh was arrested the next day, Rakesh is on the run.



## Dalit girls burnt, colony says were a shame

**Sweta Dutta** Posted online: Tue Dec 21 2010, 08:30 hrs

**Moradabad** : An eerie silence envelops the narrow, dimly lit bylanes of Kothiwal Nagar in Moradabad. Neighbours peek through windows and drawn curtains as a heavy police deployment guards the only 'Valmiki' house. Two young Dalit girls were allegedly burnt alive by an irate mob inside this house in broad daylight on Saturday as their widowed mother wailed in an adjacent room.

Geeta (25) and Neetu (22) had dreaded going out of home since December 9, when their brothers, Rakesh and Rajesh, were accused of killing a local trader's wife and eight-year-old daughter. The neighbourhood near Ek Minar Masjid in Kothiwal Nagar, a predominantly traders' locality, reacted strongly to the killing and after Rajesh went missing, targeted the girls and their mother, humiliating and threatening to kill them.

Rajkali, the girls' mother, says the neighbours even attacked the house on December 11 and threatened to kill them if Rajesh wasn't found soon. Two policemen were stationed right in front of the house, but reportedly couldn't prevent the mob attack on December 18. Rajkali was locked up before the girls were allegedly assaulted.

"We had begged the police to protect us. We even asked them to put us all behind bars. At least we would have been safe. My young daughters were brutally killed while I kept screaming for help," a distraught Rajkali told The Indian Express.

Since Sunday the mother has sought refuge with the Valmiki community, staying where the rest of the community lives.

Geeta and Neetu were the youngest of seven siblings — five sisters and two brothers. Modest girls, they had never received an education. The sons, like others of their age in the Valmiki community here, collect garbage in their neighbourhoods to earn a living. They had no criminal record.

The neighbours, however, claim the girls committed suicide, and that the family has shamed them all. As an elderly woman walking past the house complains "living here has become difficult", the corner departmental store owner talks about his slack business over the past week. "Either the police come over in large numbers or the Valmiki community blocks the lanes in protest. I have had to keep the shop closed for three days and even now people rarely come out of their houses."

Neighbour Kishor Sharma denies the possibility of a mob killing. "The girls committed suicide because of the humiliation they had to bear after their brothers got involved in theft and murder. If they were set on fire and killed, wouldn't the entire room be up in flames?" Sharma says.

"It is said that the boys killed the trader's wife and daughter brutally and looted the house. They had left a bag in the adjacent shop, which had four cellphones belonging to the trader, Pankaj Gagneja, which was later handed over to the police. While Rakesh was nabbed by the police, Rajesh is still absconding. In fact he came

back to his house to clean the bloodstains after the murder and his family knows where he is," the neighbour adds.

While the police too initially said they suspected suicide, a case has been registered against Gagneja and seven others for murder and under various sections of the Prevention of Atrocities Against SC/STs Act.

Says Ashok Kumar Singh, DIG, Moradabad: "A case has been registered based on the mother's statement. However, no evidence has been found so far against the accused. Also the postmortem report states that the death was caused due to burning and no other injuries."

Since Sunday the Valmiki community, that has over 1,400 safai karamcharis working for the Nagar Nigam Moradabad, has called an indefinite strike, seeking for immediate arrests in the case.

Vinod Bikal, advocate and a senior member of the Valmiki Samaj, says: "We want a fair judicial probe. The police refused to lodge an FIR and it was only after the postmortem yesterday that they filed a report. If they wanted, the girls could have been saved."

She had no personal problems with the neighbours, Rajkali adds. "They wanted us to move out of the locality because we were the only Dalits there."