

The Age

Women not safe even at home

A survey by the Delhi Police reveals that relatives and friends are guilty of most rape cases in the capital

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NEW DELHI

It is no secret that Delhi is said to be an unsafe city for women. Despite efforts, Delhi is finding it hard to shed this negative image. In recent years, much has been written about how women in the capital are not safe and most of them live in fear of harassment. A recent survey by the Delhi Police reveals that neighbours and acquaintances are responsible for most rape cases, and women in the capital are not even safe inside their homes.

Shocking, isn't it? The police confirmed that out of the 509 accused, who have been arrested following such cases, at least 497 were known to the victim. Out of these, 238 cases have neighbours involved, while relatives were involved in 31 cases.

Why are most sexual offences executed by people who are known to the victims? If women are not safe with their known and near ones, then whom can they trust?

"The basic reason behind it is that people who know the victim will have more accessibility. If a person is the victim's relative or her boss, he will have a certain amount of authority and control over the victim, which he would tend to exploit as the woman would not have her guard up," says Meghna Hazuria Gore, psychologist at Max Healthcare.

But why are such incidents increasing in the capital? Is it something to do with the mentality of Delhiites? "There are many



socio-economic and socio-political issues. Moreover, as the city is expanding there is an influx of people from various parts of the country — Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, the North-East. This is an important factor one must take into consideration," adds Meghna.

However, women's organisations who have been fighting against this social scourge for decades believe that the situation has only worsened. Many also opine that women who belong to the lower middle class are the most affected. They say that the state and judiciary are not doing enough for the protection of woman.

Gurbinder Singh from the Indian Social Security, a voluntary organisation for women, says, "There is not even five per cent basic machinery from the Government providing legal aid to women in comparison to the cases against them."

However, when we spoke to the Delhi Commission of Women regarding the issue, they said they are doing everything possible to curb this social evil.

Promila Mitra, deputy secretary of Delhi Commission of Women, says, "We have established Rape Crisis Cells (RCC) in different police jurisdictions. Whenever, we get to know that such incidents have taken place, our counsellor goes to the victim and takes care of her medical as well as legal necessities."

However, she agreed that in comparison to the number of rape cases, the conviction rate is very low. She says, "The court process in India is slow. This needs to change to curb the crime rate."

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