

SEXUAL HARRASMENT COMPLAINT COMMITTEE OF DEVELOPMENT WHEEL (DEW) AND DEW CEAFTS

May 13, 2009 is one of the noteworthy days in the legal history of Bangladesh since the High Court Division of the Supreme Court issued a set of guidelines defining sexual delinquency to prevent any kind of physical, mental or sexual harassment of women, girls and children at their workplaces, educational institutions and other public places including roads across the country. The HC directed the government to make a law on the basis of the guidelines, and ruled that the guidelines will be treated as a law until the law is made. The court directed the concerned authorities to form a five-member harassment complaint committee headed by a woman at every workplace and institution to investigate allegations of harassment of women. According to the HC rule, majority of the committee members must be women. Lawyers concerned said quoting the HC observations that the committee will examine complaints from girls or women if they are subjected to any mental, physical or sexual harassment, and recommend to the authorities to take action against the accused persons.

Disturbing women and children through letters, e-mails, SMS, posters, writings on walls, benches, chairs, tables, notice boards and threatening or pressing them to make sexual relations are sexual harassment and torture, the lawyers said quoting the judgement. They also said rape, sexual provocation, envious or intentional propaganda against women and children, and showing such films, digital images, paintings, cartoons, leaflets, posters and still photographs are also considered as indirect sexual harassment and torture.

According to the guidelines, nobody can touch or hurt with any bad intention any part of the body of a girl or woman. Any indecent word or comment cannot be used about them, and any unknown adult girl or any woman cannot be addressed as a beautiful one with any bad intention. Teasing women and children through e-mail or telephone will also be considered as offence, and ordered that any kind of provocation or character assassination will have to be stopped.

The HC prohibited the authorities concerned from disclosing the names and addresses of the complainants and accused persons until the allegations are proved. The HC asked the law secretary, women and children affairs secretary, education secretary, labour secretary, information secretary, University Grants Commission (UGC), university authorities, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), Bangladesh police and Bangladesh Bar Council to comply with the guidelines.

This move by High Court must remain as a landmark in the history of judiciary for protecting women from sexual harassment which demanded by the civil society organizations and women rights protecting organizations in our country.

Based on the High Court directives Development Wheel (DEW) and DEW Crafts form a Sexual Harassment Complaint Committee headed by eminent anthropologist and gender specialist Professor Ainoon Naher, Professor, Dept. of Anthropology, Jahangirnagar University. Members of the Sexual Harassment Complaint Committee are:

| Sl. No | Name | Position | Occupation | Contact information |
|--------|---|-----------------------|--|--|
| 01 | Prof. Dr. Ainoon Naher Ph D | Head of the committee | Professor Dept. of Anthropology Jahangir Nagar University | +880171119760 ainoon.naher@gmail.com |
| 02 | Prof. Dr. Zobieda Nasreen Ph D | Member | Professr Dept. of Anthropology University of Dhaka | +8801765461204 zobaidanasreen@gmail.com |
| 03 | Mrs. Selima Akhtar | Member | Development Consultant Child labor and RMG sector specialist | +8801713329243 selimaakhtar@yahoo.com |
| 04 | Barrister Ali Reza Mohammad Suzauddawla | | Lawyer Barrister at Law (Lincoln's Inn) Bangladesh Supreme Court | +8801765028899 sohaan@hotmail.co.uk |
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Above mentioned committee members will be take care of any kind of sexual harassment complaints comes to them or in the complaint box in the office or any other ways mentioned in the high court directives.