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ANTHROPOLOGY SNIPPET-128



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At a time when the world is battling a global health crisis, and state leaders are talking about forming a united front to fight the Covid-19 pandemic, things in India have taken an unpleasant turn.

The racial profiling Northeasterners are facing in the wake of Covid-19 is heart-rending. Many living in the metros are

starving or worried sick about not being able to pay rent since their employment – mainly in the informal sector – has been hit by the lockdown. To make things worse, they are being socially ostracised and shunned.

Here are five key recommendations made by the Bezbaruah Committee on tackling discrimination against the community:

New law against discrimination:

Either a new law should be promulgated as directed by the High Court of Delhi or the Indian Penal Code should be amended. The offence should be cognizable and non-bailable. The investigation of the FIR should be completed in 60 days by a special squad and investigated by a police officer not below the rank of deputy SP or ACP. A special prosecutor should be appointed to handle all

such cases of atrocities. And the trial should be completed in 90 days.

Fast-track courts and special police squads:

The Committee strongly suggests the creation of fast-track courts for handling the cases relating to the North East people, particularly those which are racially motivated and involving heinous crimes against the North East women and children. Specially designated public prosecutors should be appointed for cases involving people from the North East. They should also be properly trained and sensitised. The committee feels that the creation of a special squad supervised by the North East Special Police Unit would go a long way in ensuring speedy justice in criminal cases. The squad could be manned by people specially selected for such purposes and they could be specially trained

and sensitised about the problems of people from the North East.

Interventions in Education:

Suitable innovative ways should be devised to integrate each and every aspect of the North East into the consciousness of people outside. The Committee recommends that when the next the NCERT takes place, one, all teacher training institutes be advised to make their syllabus in a way that can sensitise their trainees on the North East and, two, universities and schools outside the North East make projects on North East a mandatory part of the course curricula.

Social media outreach and legal awareness campaigns:

The committee recommends legal awareness campaigns in neighbourhoods that have a

significant presence of members from the North East community and on introducing lectures on legal rights for university students. It underlines the role of social media in improving connectivity and communication with the community. A dedicated Facebook page should be created and nodal police officers should be in constant touch with members of the community on WhatsApp.

Bonding power of sports:

The committee recommends that the Ministry should take steps to hold regular national and international events in the North East as such events will create greater harmony and better understanding. The ministry should, therefore, review the status of present facilities and make an assessment if they are suitable for such events. If not, such facilities should be created in every state of the North

East. Indigenous games of the North East should be promoted.

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