

Maximum atrocities against Dalits in Uttar Pradesh

Contributed by Correspondent
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New Delhi: Crimes against the weakest sections of Indian society rose in 2007 for the third year running, with Uttar Pradesh topping the number of atrocities against Scheduled Caste (SC) and Schedule Tribe (ST) members, official data show. The "Crime in 2007" report of the Central Government's National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) shows that 9,819 cases of atrocities against SC and ST members were reported in 2007 in the country, 2,113 of them in Uttar Pradesh. The cases were registered under the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989.

The Bahujan Samaj Party, which was formed to combat such atrocities, came to power in Uttar Pradesh in May 2007. The report did not say if the change in government had brought about any change in the trend of atrocities.

It said there had been 8,581 cases of atrocities in 2006 and 8,497 in 2005. "The crime against SC/ST under the Act reported an increase of 14.4 per cent in 2007 compared to the previous year with Uttar Pradesh accounting for 21.5 per cent," the report pointed out.

Reacting to the NCRB report, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Shakeel Ahmad said: "Dalits are being used by political parties in Uttar Pradesh for votes. The State Government does not have any welfare agenda for the weaker sections of society. In fact, the atrocities have increased against every section of society." Dalits is an umbrella term often used for members of both SCs and STs.

"The people in the government are themselves involved in crime against every section of society. The recent case of murder of an engineer by a Bahujan Samaj Party legislator shows this very clearly," Ahmad said.

But Shahid Siddiqui, MP from the BSP, did not find anything alarming in the 2007 numbers. "The State has the highest population in the country and houses the largest number of Dalits. So it is obvious that crime against Dalits would be more compared to other states," he said.

The report also found that apart from crimes under the 1989 act, overall crime rate against the Scheduled Caste members increased 10.2 per cent in 2007, with Uttar Pradesh reporting 20.5 per cent of all cases in India. "Mayawati calls herself a Dalit messiah and it is so ironical that in the State ruled by her, Dalits are being harassed. There is a complete breakdown of law and order in Uttar Pradesh," Samajwadi Party leader and member of Rajya Sabha Kamaal Akhtar said.

The National Dalit Front (NDF), an organisation formed in early 2008 by noted social and political leaders working for the welfare of Dalits, had passed a resolution in its national conference held in the capital last November that atrocities against Dalits in the country should be put to an end.

"Despite several safeguards to protect Dalits, the atrocities against them are not getting halted and majority of crimes against Dalits are reported in Uttar Pradesh. The Central Government should step in to check the situation," said NDF leader Udit Raj.

"Mayawati should see this. She was the one who gave tickets to so many people with criminal background in the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections. These people don't care about anyone," senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader VK Malhotra said.

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