



Catholic Bishops' Conference of India(CBCI)

Office for SC/BC(Dalits and Backward classes)

CBCI Centre, 1 Ashok Place,
Goledakhana, New Delhi - 110 001

NEWS LETTER

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Dear Friends

Greetings to all of you! The CBCI Office for SC/BC is glad to send you the report of the activities from January 2019 to February 2019. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) Office for Scheduled Castes (Dalits) and backward classes undertook many programs to empower the Dalit Christians by networking with the regional secretaries. Besides the regular meetings, field visits, advocacy works and office works, we undertook the following activities at the National level.

We are in the **fourth year of our news letter**. We are grateful for the continuous support of you all.

Sr. Robancy A. Helen, National Program Coordinator, scbc@cbci.in

Artists form a National Dalit Christian Artists Forum

A three day Dalit Christian Artists workshop was held from 18th to 20th January 2019 at Indian Social Institute, Bangalore. Around 17 Dalit Christian artists from different parts of India, belonging to various denominations, participated in the workshop.

The artists also shared their artworks with other artists. Ms. Sarianna and Mr. Jussi, visitors from Sweden to the workshop, shared their experience of art work with Dalit Christian artists. On 20th an exhibition was held by displaying the artworks done by the artists. Mr. Inbakumar, General Secretary of Students Christian

Movement of India (SCMI) opened the exhibition. He insisted that we should make use of our art forms as weapons of Dalit Liberation.

The participants decided to have a National Forum for the Dalit Christian artists. The purpose of the forum is to identify and encourage the Dalit Christian artists. They also planned to conduct training programs for the young people, so that their artistic talents are nurtured.

Panel Discussion on 10% reservation for the Economically Weaker Sections:

A Panel Discussion on 10% reservation for the economically weaker sections was jointly organised by Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) Office for Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes and Christian Institute for the Study on Religion and Society (CISRS) on 6th February 2019 at CISRS, New Delhi.

It is noted that the 10% reservation may also pave way to the abolition of whole reservation system in India which will be detrimental to social justice through reservation. We should go for caste census to implement the reservation based on social justice. The reservation is given as the retributive justice, which is to right the wrong that was done to the Dalits and Backward classes for the past many centuries. Reservation is not for the upliftment of a community but rather to ensure the representation of the communities in the Governance.

In the economic policy, our country follows the trickledown theory instead of following bottom up theory as proposes by Gandhi. The Government should concentrate on Education and health, keeping in mind the saying of Gandhi, that the last should be the first. The 10% reservation to the economically weaker sections is to conceal the failure of economic policies of the successive Governments. The main reason is that we lack the Constitutional Morality. The manuvadi forces are trying to demolish the Constitution of India which is based on fraternity and justice that ensures human dignity. The Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims though are living in socio educational backwardness and experience the stigma of untouchability are denied Scheduled Caste status thus denying justice to them. Fr. Devasagayaraj moderated the panel.

The participants resolved that they should make sure that people exercise their democratic rights by going for voting and voting to the right persons.



Release of the South Asian Conference Logo:

The South Asian Conference Logo was released by Most Rev. Theodore Mascarenhas on 2nd February 2019 at CBCI Centre, New Delhi.

Meaning of the logo: The Dalit drum at the background denotes Dalitness, culture and history. The blue human figure denotes Dalits who try to rise above from the clutches and bondages. The tick mark which ends with a cross is a symbol that God helps, supports and pulls them up to a new just and equitable society. The circle with different colours denotes different countries.



The first Ever South Asian Conference on Dalits:

The South Asian Conference on the theme “Dalits Witnessing Faith at the Crossroads in South Asia and Christian Response” was organized by the CBCI Office for Dalits and Backward Classes at NBCLC on 13-14, February 2019. His Eminence Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development in Vatican was the chief guest of the

Conference. The conference started with the inaugural Mass presided over by the Cardinal. Most Rev. Theodore Mascarenhas, Secretary General of CBCI, Most Rev. Sarat Chandra Nayak, Chairperson for the CBCI Office for Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes, Most Rev. Soundraraju Periyannayagam, M.D Prakasam Member bishops of the CBCI Office for SC/BC, Most Rev. Neethinathan, Former Chairperson of the office, Most Rev. Raja Rao, Bishop of Vijayawada, Most Rev. Jaya Rao, Bishop of Eluru, Most Rev. Anthony Poola, Bishop of Kurnool concelebrated the Eucharistic and Most Rev. Peter Machado, Arch Bishop of Bangalore joined the Inaugural program.

There were 170 delegates from all over India. There were also delegates from Malaysia, Singapore, Nepal, Thailand, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Fr. Selva SJ, the director of Indian Social Institute explained the challenges faced by the Dalit Christians and Fr. Maria Arul Raja, gave the theological reflections on the topic.

The foreign delegates Mr. Paul Sinnappan from Malaysia, Mr. Sinnappan Samydorai from Singapore, Mr. Prakash Khadka from Nepal, Mr. William Nokrek from Bangladesh, Fr. Michael Rajendram from Sri Lanka and Ms. Jantima shared their faith experience of being Dalits and Mr. Paul Divakar from NCDHR moderated the session. They shared that even the untouchable practices are there in different and subtle forms.



Ms. Ludhia Digal and Asmita Digal, the widows of the victims of the Kandhamal violence shared the struggles of being Dalits and how their husbands gave their lives for the sake of their faith. The bishops along with the delegates submitted the memorandum to Cardinal Turkson requesting him to take the issues of the Dalit Christians to the Holy Father Pope Francis.

The participants planned for the way forward in which they plan to form a Forum of Dalit Christians at the Asian level.

Fr. Joshrom who is the coordinator to the Sector on ecology in the dicastery of the Promotion of Integral Human Development who accompanied Cardinal Turkson said that with the guidance of the Cardinal he would help the CBCI Office for SC/BC to link with the Vatican.

Dalit Christian Youth Delegates Meet:

Dalit Christian Youth Net Meeting was held on 14th February 2019 at NBCLC, Bengaluru. The meeting was moderated by Fr. Prakash Louis. He explained the role of youth in the Church as well as in the society. He asked the Dalit Christian youth to come forward to be volunteers to strengthen the National forum of Dalit Christian Youth Net.

He introduced Mr. Srujan Rao , National Coordinator of Dalit Christian Youth by the CBCI Office for SC/BC. Mr. Srujan informed the youth about the DC Youth Net page on Face book and requested to join and share the page. The DC youth Net will be very active in the Social Media to empower the Dalit Christian Youth and to educate about the Scheduled Caste Status to the Dalit Christians

Fr. Devasagayaraj, Secretary to the CBCI Office for SC/BC requested contact persons for the regions. A boy and a girl from each region came forward to be the contact persons in the regions. The contact persons are from Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. Soon we will find out contact persons for other regions.



It was suggested to have a National convention in 2020 and the youth will organize this mega event.

Dalit Christian Women for Change Executive Meet

Women are inborn quality as great administrators who are inherited to be the leaders at homes. Since many are home makers, their hard work is not known to the society. The National forum of Dalit Christian Women executive meeting was held on 15th February 2019 at NBCLC, Bengaluru. Dr. Isabella, the president of DCWC presided over the meeting. She said that the aim of the meeting was to strengthen the Dalit catholic women from all over India, registering the National forum as a society in the near future. It is crucial to empower the Dalit women in the regional level so that the women can speak for themselves in the Church and in the society.

Women have the power and strength to empower themselves and they have to stand united to be the voices of the voiceless women of the society. Instead of focusing on our drawbacks it's important to write down the success stories of the Dalit Christian women who challenged the odds of the caste system and have come up in life. There are so many Dalit Christian women who do marvelous work in the field of Social work, Law, Education, Medicine etc. Their stories should be documented. Sr. Robancy said.



Sr. Alphonse from Tamil Nadu, Advocate Mary Alphonsia from Hyderabad, Mrs. Jayanti Patole, the state representative of Maharashtra and Sr. Robancy, the National Program Coordinator for CBCI Office for SC/BC were in the meeting. Adv. Mary Alphonsia volunteered to help with the legal issues and it was already decided in the previous meeting Ms. Brinda Adige will be the spokesperson of DCWC. The National forum will be an independent body to look into the issues of the Dalit Catholic women.

Upcoming Events:

Consultation on Dalit Christians' SC status issue:

A consultation meeting on Dalit Christians SC status issue will be held on 27th February 2019 at CBCI Centre, New Dehi. The meeting will be presided over by Most Rev. Sarat Chandra Nayak, Chairperson of the CBCI Office for SC/BC and

will be moderated by Most Rev. Theodore Mascarenhas. The lawyers and the experts of the Dalit Christians issues will be the participants.

National Protest demanding SC Status to Dalit Christians and Muslims:

The National Council of Dalit Christians (NCDC) organizes a national protest on 12th March 2019 at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi demanding the SC Status to the Dalit Christians and Muslims. Leaders of political parties, MPs, Bishops and Church heads, Dalit Leaders of Dalit Christians and Muslims will address the Dharna.

Meeting of the Regional and Diocesan Secretaries:

The CBCI Dalit Empowerment Policy was promulgated on 13th December, 2016. Only few regions and dioceses have come out with action plans for the implementation of the policy. The Implementation of the Dalit Empowerment policy meeting will be held on 30th April 2019 at Indian Social Institute, Bengaluru. Fr. Prakash Louise SJ will guide the meeting for the implementation of the Dalit Empowerment Policy at the Regional and Diocesan levels.
