

Dalit voters attacked, intercepted

So claims NGO body Rajasthan Dalit Election Watch; officials say they will 'look into it'

Sachin Saini

BOOTH CAPTURINGS, denial of access to Dalit voters to the polling booths, beatings and torture of Dalit voters and other excesses by miscreant elements belonging to dominant castes.

More than 100 complaints to the effect were received states Rajasthan Dalit Election Watch (RDEW) that works under the National Dalit Election Watch.

The RDEW a non government organisation (NGO) works for the uplift of the Dalit community.

State coordinator of the

RDEW Gopal Ram Verma informed that in some incidents Dalits have been severely attacked by sharp weapons and firearms.

In polling booth at Basal Tala, Barmer, a Dalit Shabu Meghwal was brutally beaten and prevented from casting his vote.

Similarly at Baglai in Dausa, six people were brutally beaten by the dominant caste members and one person died in firing in Kolwara Khandar of Tonk in Sawaimadhopur constituency, said Verma.

He said the watch control room received around 65 complaints from constituencies

such as Karoli-Dholpur, Alwar, Jhodbpur, Ajmer, Dausa, Nagaur, Tonk-Sawaimadhopur, Barmer, Jhalawar and Bharatpur, where the Dalits were prevented from voting by the dominant caste members or were brutally beaten by them.

Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) vice president Raghu Sharma said, "This is not the first time that such incidents are happening. In every election, the Dalits are restricted from voting. It is very unfortunate."

Sharma said, "It is the duty of the Election Commission to ensure that Dalits vote safely.

Why not deploy extra police force at such places where there such a possibility?"

Lamenting, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) state president Dugar Ram Godar on Friday said, "I have met chief electoral officer Vinod Jutshi and submitted a two-page complaint over the same issue."

Godar added, "In my complaint, I have mentioned areas where Dalits were stopped from casting their vote such as Bilada, Bhopalgarh and Osia. It is very unfortunate that in an independent country like India people are treated like this."

Sociologist Rajeev Gupta

said, "It is known fact that after Independence the entire political process is regulated, directed and controlled by the upper castes and in several areas by the dominant caste of the area. All these caste groups wish to maintain their control and monopoly over wealth, prestige and power," he added.

Gupta said, "As a result the participation of the Dalits in adult franchise is not appreciated by the dominant caste of the area and this is the main reason for their victimisation."

He said, "This needs to be controlled by the administration. But by and large they also belong to upper and middle

castes. As a result their efforts are just eyewash, this is where their seriousness needs to be questioned," he said.

BJP state women president Suman Sharma said, "It is very unfortunate but the fact is Dalits are always considered as a mere vote bank by the parties."

She said, "The Election Commission has also become a part of the ruling government and they are not independent. The day Dalits become literate and would not be considered as a vote bank, things will be improve," she said.

Director General of Police

PK Tiwari said, "This is the foremost thing. We had directed the police to ensure that all classes and communities vote freely. Additional security forces were deployed at sensitive areas. Zonal magistrates were on constant rounds to keep vigil. If any such incidents have taken place, then we will certainly look into it," he added.

Assistant chief election officer Vinod Pareek said, "We have received a letter from the National Dalit Election Watch. We have sent it for the investigation and the authenticity of it would be known after getting the report."