

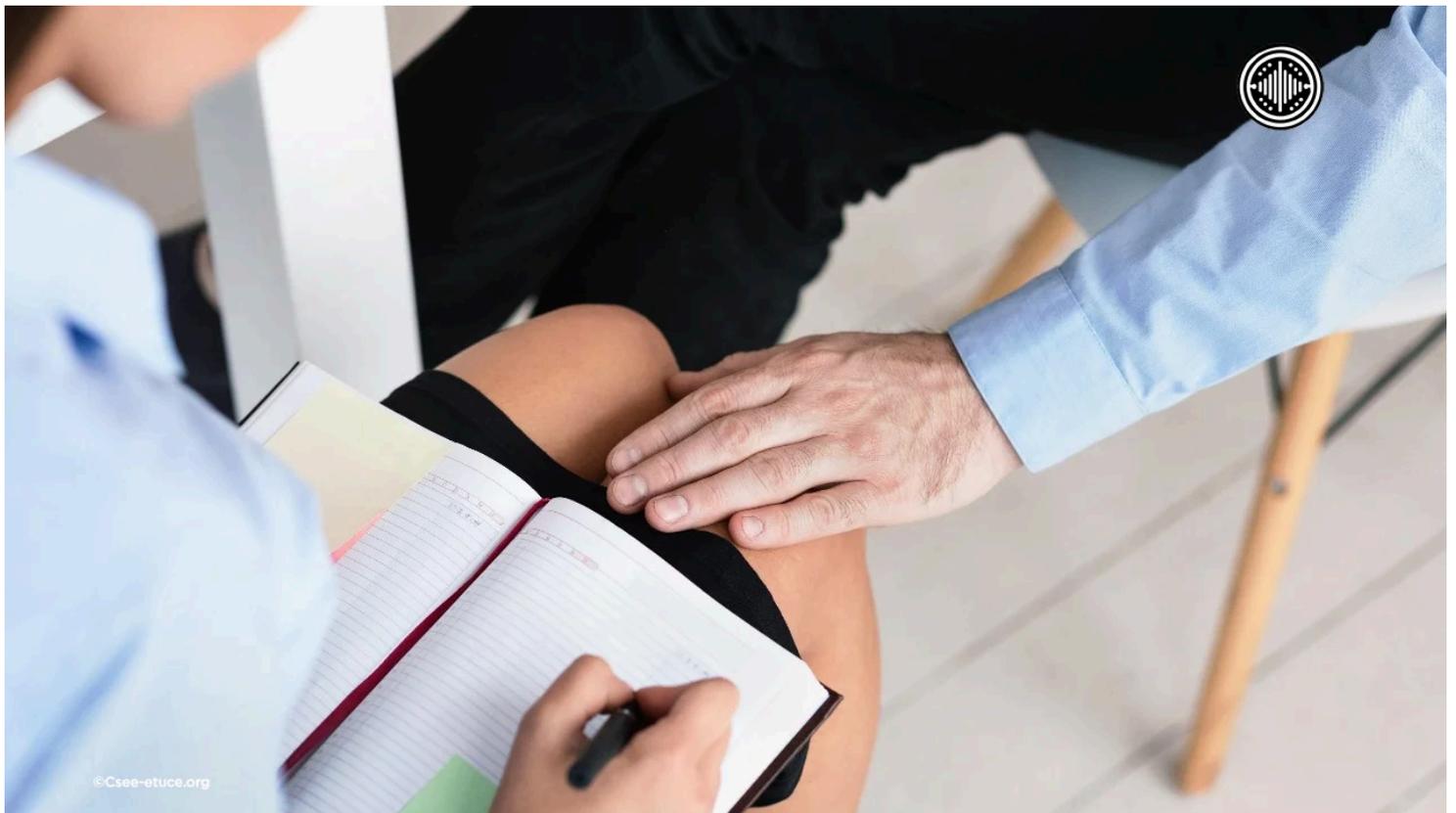
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Odisha ICC Report in Sexual Harassment Case Recommends No Punitive Action

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– Categories: Crime



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The Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) of a government college in Balasore, Odisha, did not recommend any disciplinary action against a Head of Department (HOD) accused of sexual harassment, according to official reports. The student who filed the complaint later died by suicide, prompting widespread outrage and multiple investigations into the college's handling of the case.

The 20-year-old student submitted a formal complaint on June 30, alleging that the HOD had sought sexual favors from her six months earlier. The college formed an ICC on July 1, which completed its inquiry without finding the accused guilty or suggesting any punitive measures. The student died on July 14 after setting herself on fire outside the college on July 12.

According to a government-appointed probe team, the ICC failed to follow mandatory procedures under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. The committee lacked trained members and adequate representation, and was reportedly constituted solely to meet formal requirements.

Further reports reveal that an ICC member had recommended the removal of the accused from the department chair position during the investigation. However, the college principal did not act on the recommendation. Instead, the principal allegedly threatened the student with rustication for making a complaint without “proof,” violating provisions of the PoSH Act that protect complainants from victimization.

“The ICC process was deeply flawed. The committee acted in a perfunctory manner and failed to ensure a fair hearing,” said an official familiar with the investigation.

Following the student’s death, the Odisha Higher Education Department ordered all colleges and universities in the state to establish fully functional ICCs and submit compliance reports within 24 hours. The University Grants Commission (UGC), Odisha Crime Branch, and the National Human Rights Commission have all launched separate investigations into the case.

Public protests have intensified across the state, demanding justice for the victim and accountability from college authorities. The failure of the ICC to recommend any action is now a key focus in the ongoing criminal and administrative investigations.