

Former Miss World Linor Abargil urges rape victims to speak out & seek justice
Recounts her fight back story at FLO event to celebrate International Women's Day

NEW DELHI, March 11, 2014: The statistics are chilling: Every 21 minutes a girl is raped in India! Every 14 minutes a woman is kidnapped! In 2012, there were 706 reported rapes in Delhi alone. These figures, however, camouflage the whole story. Most cases of rapes go unreported as society views the victim with suspicion, paying little heed to the loss of honour suffered by the victim.

Yet there is hope. The brutal 'Nirbhaya' episode two years ago, shook the nation's consciousness and her legacy has changed the way the country is responding to such attacks. Both women and men are demanding the right to be protected in their homes, in schools and colleges and the workplace. And police reporting of such crimes are on the rise.

In another part of the world, 16 years ago, an 18-year old Israeli girl was raped at knife-point, a girl, who two months after the horrific incident, found a voice as she was crowned Miss World at the international beauty pageant.

Ms. Linor Abargil was at Federation House at a function organized by FICCI Ladies Organization (FLO) to celebrate International Women's Day. She lives on to recount what she went through on that fateful day, how her family, especially the mother stood by her in her fight to bring the guilty to justice. Much of her honour is restored as the man who committed the brutal crime was sentenced to 16 years in prison.

"I was raped, but I did not remain silent", says Linor, adding that "This world is, unfortunately, very violent, but if we speak against it, such acts will happen less. Not speaking up is the worst thing. It is like a tumour, which will only grow bigger and bigger."

"All of us need to know that without a woman there is no life. I don't think a man can live without a woman, but a woman can live without a man," she said and sought to inspire the audience, stating that "You can make a change. Just believe in yourself and if something happens, talk about it. Use the media, write letters, but don't be quiet, for this is what they (rapists) want. "

Mr. Sidharth Birla, President of FICCI, in his remarks, said, "FICCI believes in empowerment of women and girls, as also regards their full participation in the economy, as crucial. For society to realize and benefit from their full potential, women must be free from any and all kinds of discrimination. This can help address some of the greatest challenges of this century and bring about a positive and lasting change."

The audience heard an inspiring address by Mr. Alon Ushpiz, Israeli Ambassador to India, which was read out in absentia. The event was also addressed by Ms. Malvika Rai, President of FLO and Ms. Neeta Boochra, President-Elect, FLO.
