

TANA's open letter to Ambassador Ronen Sen

IN an open letter to Ronen Sen, Ambassador of India to the United States, Jayaram Komati, president of the Telugu Association of North America (TANA), seeks support to prevent the unprecedented rise in senseless atrocities against Indian students all over the United States, many of whom belong to Andhra Pradesh. The letter also discusses the helplessness of parents and relatives of the victims who cannot stay here for long and pursue the cases so that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

From:

Jayaram Komati, President (interim)
Prasad Thotakura, Secretary
Mohan Nannapaneni, Treasurer and
Governing Board Members on behalf of the
thousands of members of the Telugu Association of North America (TANA)

To:

The Honorable Ronen Sen
Ambassador of India to the United States of
America,
2107 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington,
DC 20008
Telephone: (202) 939-7000
Fax: (202) 265-4351
November 10, 2008

Subject: Petition to provide necessary support to prevent current spate of atrocities on Indian students in USA

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

Greetings! As you may be aware, in the past decade there has been an increase in the number of young men and women from India arriving in the United States for higher studies

and to work in the software industry. But unfortunately, in the recent past, we have been witnessing a spate of senseless crimes all over the world against students — especially in the United States. We are also concerned that several of these victims hail from Andhra Pradesh. Some of the recent cases are:

1. Aparna Jinaga, a graduate student, was found murdered in Seattle, WA on November 1, 2008.

2. Soumya Reddy Tummala, a post-graduate student at Southern Illinois University, was killed by an unidentified assailant in Chicago around September 15, 2008.

3. Vikram Kumar Tummala, cousin of Soumya Reddy, was killed by an unidentified assailant in Chicago around September 15, 2008.

4. Dr Srinivas Akkaladevi, a post-graduate medical student was found murdered in Scranton, Pennsylvania in March, 2008.

5. Kirankumar Allam and Chandrasekhar Reddy Komma, both PhD students, were shot dead at Louisiana University on December 13, 2007.

6. Abhijeet Mahato, an IIT Kanpur alumnus who was studying at Duke University, North Carolina, was shot dead on January 18, 2008.

What bothers us most is the fact that the incidents are forgotten as soon as they are reported. There does not seem to be a proper closure for the families either for finding out what actually happened or of seeing the criminals brought to justice and punished. The parents are helpless because they cannot stay here for long, and in the midst of their agony, they are least likely to be thinking of the criminal justice system in America.

We believe that, in the absence of an interested party on behalf of the victim, the local law enforcement authorities, the foreign student offices of the universities and the employers (if the victims were also employed) tend to grow complacent in their due diligence in pursuit of the criminals in a relatively short period of time. Therefore, we as a community, wish to hold the law enforcement agencies and other involved organizations accountable to do the best that can be done to bring the criminals to justice.

We seek your help in doing the following:

1. Set up an office in the Embassy and other Consulates which will do the following:

■ Provide advice, guidance, support and care for students from India in the United States. Perhaps a resource booklet be made and given to every student arriving in US.

■ Work with local, state, federal and academic institutions for an efficient, transparent and expedited investigation into all these unsolved murder cases and bring to justice the culprits.

■ Form a liaison with United States federal agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to ensure full protection to students of Indian origin living and studying at various US universities.

■ Increase safety precautions for the international student community who are particularly vulnerable in their living arrangements in a foreign country.

2. Work with Ministry for Overseas Indians in New Delhi to:

■ Develop necessary educational and advisory mechanisms to be imparted to all students going overseas.

■ Develop and maintain a full database of all students with local and home addresses/contacts to reach in case of emergencies.

■ Develop and maintain a full database of all popular overseas university destinations with addresses and contacts of all university administrators, International student bodies, Indian student associations, and local Indian community organizations internationally.

3. Set up an emergency team of counselors who will work with university, local Indian groups as well as with next of kin to help tackle the issues related to medical, legal, financial, grief counseling, and transportation/logistics of body.

We would like to inform you that the Telugu Association of North America (TANA) representing the Telugu NRIs of North America, has established a committee called "TANA Emergency Assistance Management" (TEAM) to help out Telugu NRIs in cases of emergencies.

Apart from the aforementioned suggestions, we welcome your recommendations for us to implement as a community.

Your timely help is greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

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