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## Global acclaim for speedy trial model

RAMASHANKAR



Princeton University's website

**Patna, Feb. 4:** The state government's initiative to rein in crime and criminals through speedy trials has achieved global acclaim. Princeton University, USA, has included the Bihar government's innovative step to improve law and order in its list of case studies and posted it on its official website — [www.princeton.edu/successfulsocieties](http://www.princeton.edu/successfulsocieties).

A record number of convictions, including that of some *bahubalis*(musclemen), and its impact on the law and order condition in Bihar, which had acquired the dubious reputation of being a lawless state before the

Nitish Kumar-led NDA government came to power in 2005, has drawn the attention of Princeton University.

The US varsity, regarded as one of the best in the world, keeps tabs on experiments and innovative methods adopted by government machineries, mostly in third world countries, to sort out the problems faced by them.

Rohan Mukherjee, a representative of the university, came to Bihar in July 2009. He interviewed Abhayanand, a 1977-batch Bihar cadre IPS officer who is said to be the brain behind the speedy trial and convictions of criminals.

The daunting task of curtailing the spate of kidnappings, robberies and dacoities in trains and roads was assigned to Abhayanand, who was then posted as additional director-general of police (headquarters). He was also in-charge of the state police's intelligence wing.

"Kidnapping for ransom was a major issue. It was an election issue as well. The government wanted to check this menace at all cost. It was prepared to help the police in anyway because it was an election promise," Abhayanand told Mukherjee. Checking robberies, murders, mass killings and caste riots was also on the priority list of the new government. The perception of *jungle raj* in Bihar, the issue on which the election was fought, had to be changed. "So we decided to crack down hard on crime. The cases were put on speedy trial and the convictions gained speed," Abhayanand said in his interview.

Initially, the police officers were reluctant to extend assistance for speedy trail. "They often asked me about the primary job of the police. Some of them even told me that getting the offenders convicted was not the job of the police. But I convinced them to be proactive. I used to tell them that if we detect five per cent of the cases and ensure speedy convictions, it will send out a strong message to the criminals," said Abhayanand.

He added: "The superintendents and the deputy superintendents of police were directed to produce witnesses in courts." The police first took up the cases related to the arms act, as witnesses were less likely to turn hostile.

"In a short span, we achieved astonishing results. It was enough to ensure that the criminals got the message," said Abhayanand.

As the state police was facing manpower shortage and recruiting policemen was a long drawn process, Abhayanand recommended the state government to appoint retired army

personnel as the Special Auxiliary Police (SAP) for carrying out special operations against Naxalites and criminal gangs.

“The outcome of engaging SAP in special operations was unexpected,” Abhyanand said. He added that the government’s initiative received accolades from senior officers of the ministry of defence, who asked other states to follow the Bihar model.

Abhayanand, who is at present posted as ADG (training), attributed the success in containing organised crime to team effort and the government’s policy.

According to official data available at the state police headquarters, over 56,000 criminals have been convicted in Bihar since January 2006.

In 2010 alone, 14,311 persons were convicted in speedy trials out of which 37 persons were awarded capital punishment and 1,875, life imprisonment.



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