



NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

Undertrials languishing in Byculla Jail despite being granted bail

PRESS NOTE

27th April, 2018, Mumbai: In compliance of its mandate, a team from the National Commission for Women (NCW), led by Chairperson Smt. Rekha Sharma, visited Byculla Women's Jail in Mumbai on April 27.

The inspection was carried out for assessing and looking into various aspects including overcrowding, availability of legal help, rehabilitation plans including skill development and training, legal awareness and legal help for women inmates, proper facilities for the children of these inmates among others.

The amenities available in Byculla Women's Jail and the sensitivity to women have shown marked improvement. A separate area was demarcated for lodging inmates who had small children and the inmates were happy with the quality of food provided.

However, the areas that need substantial improvement are:

- (i) Availability of a formal in-house gynaecologist and paediatrician for inmates and their children
- (ii) Efficient legal aid service for undertrials was lacking
- (iii) Absence of crèche facility
- (iv) No guidance and policy for pregnant women

Giving details of the visit, Smt. Sharma said that the main problem observed during inspection and after interacting with inmates was that of an inefficient legal aid service. The team met undertrials who are suffering prolonged detention due to substandard legal aid. Many undertrials were languishing in jail despite being granted bail as many had no financial means to pay for bail bonds.

Furthermore, there was an absence of an institutionalised system or fast track courts for foreign women inmates who were in prison for such offences as trafficking and drug peddling.

The inspection conducted today is a part of the NCW's ongoing project to visit all jails in the country in order to formulate a manual for comprehensive prison reforms for women inmates in India. A number of other jail inspections have been planned by the Commission for the coming months.
