



Editor's Column

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Under the Indian Penal Code, crimes such as rape, murder, dacoity and acid attacks, which invite jail terms of seven years or more, are defined as 'heinous crimes'. As per the present Bill, juveniles accused of such crimes will be tried as adults and may face a maximum jail term of seven years but will not be awarded life sentence or death penalty.

The Juvenile Justice Board, however, will decide case by case, whether the minor will be tried under the Juvenile Justice Act or in a regular trial court as an adult. Incidentally, the juvenile involved in the December 16 gangrape, said to be the most vicious of the lot, spent little more than two

FOCUS Juvenile Justice Bill, 2015

years in a correctional facility, while his co-convicts face death penalty.

Admittedly, the number of juveniles or minors, who are under 18 years of age, are taking to crime in a big way. According to the NCRB data, cases against juveniles have risen steadily over the past three years from 31,973 in 2012; 35,861 in 2013 to 38,565 in 2014.

Here it is relevant to mention that

seven months ago, a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court had asked the centre to "relook, rescrutinise, and revisit the relevant provisions of the Act to make it more stringent". The Bench said that "it was extremely difficult to believe that juveniles were unaware of the consequences while committing rape, dacoity and murder".

Worldwide, many countries also, like Britain, France and some states in US have separate courts to try juveniles, who have committed heinous crimes. Lowering the age of juveniles will take into account the reality of changed India, where crimes against women are on the rise. However, the government must also ensure that cases involving juveniles must be handled with sensitivity, in accordance with the severity of their crime and not just on the basis of their age.

Important Decisions

- The Supreme Court has said that a woman has an inalienable right to 'stridhan' and she can claim it even after separating from her husband. In a ruling, the apex court said that denial of 'stridhan' would amount to domestic violence, making her husband and in-laws liable to prosecution. 'Stridhan' refers to all valuables-movable and immovable property, besides gifts and other items - a woman receives during her lifetime, including the ones received prior to marriage, at the time of marriage and during the birth of her child or children.
- Soon, all cell phones will be equipped with a panic button to assist women in distress. Both existing and new cell phones will be covered under this plan. If a woman is in trouble, she can just press the button on the cell phone and will immediately get help.
- The Supreme Court has asked all State Governments and Union Territories to consider acid attack survivors as disabled persons to enable them to get benefits of 3% reservation in government jobs meant for physically-handicapped people.
- The Bombay High Court said that women have the right to decent toilets at all convenient places, while outdoors, in accordance with their right to live with human dignity. The court has directed municipal corporations across Maharashtra to 'formulate a comprehensive scheme for construction of toilets, restrooms for women walking on the streets', and also identify suitable locations, such as near gardens, bus stops, rickshaw & taxi stands, crowded places, railway stations, government and municipal offices, having regular supply of water and power.

Training for Women Police Officials

The National Commission for Women in collaboration with the Bureau of Police Research and Development organised a three-day training programme for women police officers with special focus on capacity building of women police officers investigating crimes against women in New Delhi.

Delivering the inaugural address, NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam emphasised that there has been a steady increase in all types of crimes against women during the last 10-15 years. She spoke about the problems faced by police personnel such as inadequate police force, political



Member Secretary Preeti Madan, Ms. Nirmal Kaur, IG, BPR&D, NCW Chairperson and Shri Radhakrishnan Kini, Special DG, BPR&D at the inaugural session

interference, lack of counselling facilities. She said that the objective of the programme was to upgrade knowledge and investigating skills of officers as proper collection of evidence play a vital role in strengthening a case. The inaugural session was followed by technical sessions dealing with the status of women in contemporary society; forensic science and crime investigation; criminal amendment act 2013, forensic medicare and post mortem examination, etc. The recommendations emerging out of deliberations will be sent to the concerned



Women Police Officials participating in the programme

Consultation on women with disability

The National Commission for Women organised a consultation on women with disability in New Delhi. The inaugural address was delivered by Shri Lov Verma, Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

In most parts of the world, people with disabilities are subjected to multiple deprivations with limited access to basic services including education, employment, rehabilitation facilities etc. Though at the policy level, progressive legislations, schemes and provisions exist, yet at the ground level, the disabled continue to be neglected and marginalised with the onus of care falling on the family rather than the community. In that context, the consultation discussed the legal framework for safeguarding the interest of women with disability alongwith pragmatic interventions and came up with recommendations for the way forward.



At the consultation (from left) Member Laldinglani Sailo, Member Alok Rawat, Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam, Shri Lov Verma and Member Secretary Preeti Madan

Complaints received by NCW in writing and online in December, 2015

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NCW had taken up 19 suo moto cases in December, 2015.

Promoting Women Entrepreneurship

NCW Chairperson recently delivered a special address during a session on "Promoting Women Entrepreneurship: The Leap Forward" as part of the Global Business Summit organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry in partnership with the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) in New Delhi.

During her address, she raised the issues such as lack of funds, lack of ownership assets, lack of access to training and mentorship, lack of childcare facilities, lack of networking opportunities and inadequate exposure to technology, etc.

Ms. Kumaramangalam also dwelt on important issues such as widespread violence against women, male preference in education and economic opportunities. She

concluded by saying that change in the mindset at a rapid pace is required to provide equal opportunities and access to women entrepreneurs. The other eminent speakers focused on current stakes of women entrepreneurship, various challenges and opportunities peculiar to women entrepreneurship, potential for women entrepreneurship in the digitally-connected world and policy reforms necessary to hike the share of women in MSME sector.



NCW Chairperson addressing the gathering

Convention of Dalit and Adivasi Organisation

National Confederation of Dalit Adivasi Organisations organised the 12th All-India Convention of Dalit Adivasi organisations on "Transforming India and Achieving Socially Development Goals : Strengthening the Stake of Socially Excluded", in New Delhi. More than 700 leaders of socially excluded-communities from more than 25 states participated in the convention. The convention deliberated upon different development issues and strategies concerning the socially-excluded communities in India, especially in the context of sustainable development goals.



NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam addressing the convention

Workshop on Data Gaps on Gender Statistics

Ministry of Statistics and Empowerment in partnership with Ministry of WCD organised a National Workshop on "Data Gaps on Gender Statistics" in collaboration with UN Women and UNFPA in New Delhi.

Chairing the technical session, NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam said that women face various problems "as they have no access to entitlements, assets, information or technology due to our social culture, political economy, the economics of women empowerment, and the institutional nature of patriarchy which reinforces women's drudgery".



NCW Chairperson (second from right) with other speakers in the panel

Members' Visits

❖ Member Rekha Sharma attended a legal awareness programme organised by Jamia Milia Islamia University in collaboration with NCW in Delhi. She spoke on Criminal, Personal and Constitutional laws as well as on Reproductive Rights and sexual harassment at workplace. ● Ms. Sharma also attended the legal awareness programme organised by the Faculty of Law, Amity University in Noida. ● On her visit to Benaras, the Member discussed the complaints registered in NCW with the SP and DM of Varanasi and Secretary, District Legal Services Authority. She also visited the Widow Ashram and the Nari Niketan to interact with the inmates. ● Ms. Sharma was the chief guest at the Human Rights Awareness Programme organised by Human Rights Mission in Delhi. ● Ms. Sharma visited the Allahabad Government Hospital to examine what facilities were available in the hospital and also met the Secretary, District Legal Services Authority to discuss the large number of complaints received by NCW. ● The Member visited Chandigarh and met the Minister, WCD, and Additional Chief Secretary, to discuss various women-related issues. ● Ms. Sharma visited the Psychiatric Hospital at Calicut along with a team of NIMHANS, Bangalore, to meet mentally-challenged patients. She felt that the hospital needed better infrastructure and more staff.



Member Rekha Sharma with Varanasi DM

❖ Member Sushma Sahu met DGP Maharashtra and senior police officers to discuss the status of complaints received by the police and to enquire into the steps taken to ensure safety of women. She also requested the Chief minister to nominate a Chairperson for the State Commission for Women. ● The Member visited Pune to conduct enquiries pertaining to some cases received in NCW. During her visit, she also met the Pune Commissioner of Police, concerned police officials and the victims. Later, she visited Pimpri and attended a workshop on "Women Rights and Duties". ● Ms Sahu attended a seminar on "Gender Sensitization and Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace" organised by the Reserve Bank of India at Patna. The Member was also the chief guest at the "Hemophilia East Zone Women Conference" at Patna.



Member Sushma Sahu addressing the Reserve Bank employees

❖ Member Laldinglani Sailo held a meeting with Broadcasting Content Complaint Council at the BCCC office in New Delhi to discuss retrogressive portrayal of women in TV serials. ● Ms. Sailo visited the Regional Mental hospital at Yerwada in Pune alongwith senior officials of NIMHANS to meet mentally-challenged patients. She interacted with the patients and their families as well as service providers and reviewed the structural and functional facilities of the hospital ● She held a hearing in her office with officials of the Benaras Hindu University in connection with the complaints of sexual harassment lodged by two women.

❖ Member Alok Rawat participated in a consultation meeting organised by NCW on expanding opportunities for differently-abled women. ● The Member attended a presentation by TISS, Mumbai, on "Empowering Panchayati Raj women representatives" and made various suggestions for improving the module. ● The Member attended a legal awareness programme on women-related laws organised by Jamia Milia Islamia in New Delhi. ● The Member gave an orientation lecture to the staff and officers of NCW on hassle-free procedural working in the office as per the procedures outlined in the Central Secretariat Manual. ● The Member attended a presentation on the research study on "Effect of female literacy in villages of Supaul district in Bihar. ● The Member discussed setting up of a special cell for women in police stations in Sonitpur district of Assam with the Assam State Women Commission and Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

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