



Rashtra Mahila

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Editor's Column

The Ministry of Women and Child Development needs to be applauded for its recent decision to make it mandatory for private and public institutions to provide creches and day-care centres for working mothers. The decision will go a long way in helping many women, who though highly qualified are deterred from taking up a career and perforce have to stay at home in order to look after the family and children due to lack of any support system.

Admittedly, looking after the home and children and simultaneously pursuing a career often creates tension in the family. The result being the working women can neither do justice to their family nor to their profession.

FOCUS

**HOPE FOR
WORKING
MOTHERS**

Consequently, many women take a softer line by opting for less demanding flexy jobs, which are not commensurate with their qualifications.

A later entry, into a regular job, when women are comparatively free from family responsibility, is often difficult and sometimes demoralising, when their batchmates by that time have climbed up the corporate ladder.

The proposed Bill, therefore, hoping to bridge the chasm between family and career is a right step towards women's empowerment. The Bill will certainly provide an opportunity to make a difference in the quality of lives of working mothers.

Delhi Tops Crime Against Women List

Delhi continues to maintain its dubious distinction of being unsafe for women, recording highest rate of crime against women at 27.6 per cent. The national average is 14.1 per cent.

The alarming data, part of a report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), include crimes such as rape, dowry deaths, molestation and incest. Delhi is followed by Andhra Pradesh which reported 26.1 per cent of such crimes.

Among the 35 mega cities in the country, those having more than 10 lakh of population and above, Delhi alone reported 33.2 per cent (562) of the total 1,693 rape cases.

The report further added that out of total number of 2,409 cases of kidnapping and abduction of women, Delhi recorded 37.4 per cent or 900 cases.

Delhi has also topped the list of crime against children with 6.5 per cent as compared to national average of 1.4 per cent, NCRB said.

Pointing out that one case of IPC crime was reported every 17 seconds, the NCRB in its 'crime clock-2005' said one crime was committed against women every 3 minutes, one dowry death every 77 minutes, one rape every 29 minutes, cruelty by husband or relatives one every 9 minutes, one molestation case every 15 minutes, while one sexual harassment case was recorded every 53 minutes.

Mother's Name on Children's Certificates

The Mother's name will finally feature on her child's education documents nearly 10 years after women's organisations first raised the issue in Delhi. As of now, only the father's name is mentioned on these documents.

All Central Government run educational institutions, barring technical education institutions under the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), will now seek the mother's details on admission forms and list her name in a separate column on certificates and degrees.

These directions have been issued to several Central Government ministries as well. However, among states, only Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Assam have issued the orders.

Workshop on NRI Marriages

A workshop on the problems related to NRI marriages was organised jointly by the Overseas Indian Affairs ministry and the National Commission for Women (NCW) at the Centre for Development Studies (CDS) at Thiruvananthapuram.

Inaugurating the workshop, the Union Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi said that the Ministry has launched an awareness campaign among young women and their families on their rights before entering into overseas alliances.

Women are active participants in the migration process within and between countries and so states would be instructed to make marriage and birth registrations compulsory, he said.

On the basis of many complaints received, it has been recommended to amend the laws concerning women as well as the Indian Passport Act.

“Under the Ministry, several offices have been opened in European countries to receive complaints and collect details. Every Indian embassy will have a gender cell,” he said.

While the number of women migrants have shot up over the years, the problems related to them have come into focus only recently.

Women often migrate as dependents or spouses. They are vulnerable to “discrimination, deprivation, hardship and abuse” due to their gender, the Minister said. Besides, they also have little access to well-paid jobs.

Justice to the victims of overseas marriages is limited by the fact that it is not only governed by the Indian law but also by the more complex laws within the jurisdiction of that particular country.

To deal with issues such as NRI marriages, divorce, annulment and abandonment, an international advocacy campaign was launched in 1990. That campaign led to the formation of an

international organisation, the ‘Hague Conference on International Private Law’, to deal with issues relating to women. India would become a member of the organisation within a month.

Addressing the workshop, Health Minister P.K. Sreemathy said that problems related to NRI wives was a social issue and society as a whole should involve itself in the issue.

“This year, the Social Welfare Department will undertake a Rs. 5-crore

project to set up rehabilitation centres at five places in the state for such victims”, she said.

Speaking on the occasion, NCW Chairperson Dr. Girija Vyas said the Commission, which was conducting regional workshops, would submit its suggestions to the Centre to frame new laws to prevent harassment of women, who were married to NRIs. She said that awareness drives and proper execution of laws were the need of the hour.



*At the inaugural session, sitting from left
Ms. P.K. Sreemathy, Mr. Vayalar Ravi, Dr. Girija Vyas*



*Dr. Girija Vyas with NCW members (from left) Yasmeeen Abrar, Manju S. Hembrom,
Nirmala Venkatesh at the workshop*

Members' Visits

- Member Neeva Konwar attended a two-day workshop on 'Panchayat Mahila Shakti Abhiyan' in Imphal to discuss the problems of women panchayat members and to deliberate on the institutional mechanisms that could strengthen women's empowerment.



Member Neeva Konwar at the Panchayat programme.
Shri Mani Shankar Aiyar is on her left.

- Member Yasmeen Abrar visited Jaipur Jail and inspected the jail premises and the barracks. She was satisfied with the facilities given to the prisoners. Later, she visited the SMS Hospital and found its condition satisfactory.

Ms. Abrar also visited the General Hospital at Sawai Madhopur and interacted with the doctors, nurses, general staff, ward boys and girls and the patients. She found the hospital premises unclean; there were no coolers, exhausts in the wards and bedsheets for



Member Yasmeen Abrar consoling a woman patient

the patients. She told the hospital administration to look into these aspects and clean up the hospital.

Later, she visited the Sawai Madhopur jail and found the number of inmates were more than its capacity. She suggested that the number of barracks should be increased, the hospital should be cleaned properly and creative training programmes should be started for the inmates.

Ms Abrar attended a two-day National Consultation Meet on 'Women and Natural Disasters', held in Mumbai organised by Stree Adhar Kendra. Later, she attended a seminar on 'Spreading Legal Awareness', amongst the Mahilas of Maharashtra.

Ms. Abrar went to Kota and held a meeting with the Commissioner, SP and SSP at the Medical College to discuss the case of harassment of girls by the teachers. Later, she met the Divisional Commissioner to discuss with him the NCW programme 'Chalo Gaon Ke Ore' and other schemes for women's upliftment.

- Member Nirmala Venkatesh visited Chattanahalli in Mandya district to enquire into the rape and assault of a quarry women labourer leading to suicide. She met the husband, mother and other relatives of the victim, who asked her to help in lodging an FIR in Udipi. She spoke to SP and DC regarding the case and held a meeting with officers of the Revenue, Social Welfare, WCD and the police and suggested various measures for the rehabilitation for the quarry labourers.



Member Nirmala Venkatesh talking to quarry labourers.

Complaints Committee at NCW

A Complaints Committee, in accordance with the Supreme Court Judgement on “Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace in Vishakha & others Vs. State of Rajasthan & others (AIR 1997 SC 3011), for redressal of complaints made by the victim of sexual harassment at workplace in relation to National Commission for Women has been constituted of the following members :

Ms. Gurpreet Kaur Deo, Deputy Secretary, NCW, Chairperson of the Committee; Ms. Romi Sharma, US-cum-PRO, NCW, Member of the Committee; Dr. Ms. Jaya Kottai Pillai, Member of the Committee; Ms. Madhu Pal, Member of the Committee.

Nagaland House Passes Women Panel Bill

The Nagaland state government will constitute the Nagaland Women’s Commission within three months to perform the assigned functions.

The Commission shall consist of a Chairperson and two women members nominated by the state government, who shall be persons of eminence with sufficient knowledge and experience.

Women in Armed Forces to have Parity with Men

The government has taken a decision that women officers in the Short Service Commission (SSC) will get exactly the same rank and salary as their male counterparts. From now on women will be recruited at Lieutenant level and they will be automatically promoted to the post of Captain after two years, to the post of Major after six years and to the post of Lt Colonel after 13 years of reckonable service.

Since salaries are related to the ranks, disparity in this aspect will end with equality of promotions.

IMPORTANT DECISIONS

Accused Can be Tried for Both Murder and Abetment to Suicide : Bombay HC

Can a person charged with the murder of his wife in a case of dowry related death also be charged for abetment to suicide? Given the heinous nature of the crime, the Bombay High Court says a trial court has the right to frame two distinctly contrary charges and have the accused husband or his family defend both these charges. Given police flexibility in dealing with dowry deaths which are often difficult to prove as murders, framing charges by a trial court is the first step that would decide what the accused has to be tried for.

FIR Delay Cannot be Used as Formula for Throwing Out Rape Case : Supreme Court

The Supreme Court has held that delay in lodging the First Information Report (FIR) by a rape victim cannot be a ground for acquittal of the accused.

“The courts cannot overlook the fact that in sexual offences delay in the lodging of the FIR can be due to a variety of reasons, particularly, the reluctance of the prosecutrix or her family members to go to the police and complain about the incident, which concerns the reputation of the

prosecutrix and the honour of her family”.

Her not informing anyone about the incident in the circumstances cannot detract from her reliability.

Sex With Minor on Promise of Marriage is Rape

The Supreme Court, in a major verdict on ‘consent’ for sex, has said that those who lure impressionable girls into sexual relationship with false promises of marriage are guilty of rape.

However, if the evidence leads the court to come to a firm conclusion that it was not only the accused but the girl was also equally keen, then in that case, the offence can’t be termed rape.

Outraging Modesty : ‘Culpable Intent the Crux’

In a significant ruling, the Supreme Court has held that the modesty of a girl is outraged the moment a man touches her body with criminal intention. “The ultimate test for ascertaining whether the modesty of a woman has been outraged, assaulted or insulted is when the action of the offender should be such that it may be perceived as one which is capable of shocking the sense of decency of a woman.”

Dropout Rate of Girls

The number of school girls quitting class before crossing the secondary level is the highest in Bihar followed by West Bengal.

The dropout rate for school girls in Bihar is 85.36% up to class X and 79.62% up to class VIII.

In West Bengal, 84.44% of school girls quit class before crossing the secondary level. Meghalaya, however, had the highest dropout rate for both male and female school children up to class X.

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