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Foreign Funded NGO’S

Details of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) registered under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 2010 who are receiving Foreign Contribution are available on the website: www.fcraonline.nic.in.

Names of NGOs sent to CBI during the last 5 years for registration of case against them for violating the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), 2010 is as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Name of NGOs</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>1) New Life Ministries in India, Gospel Home, behind TB Chickaballapur, Taluk, District Chickballapur, Kolar, Karnataka</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Delhi</td>
<td>1) M/s Advantage India, 101-102, Oriental House, Gulmohar Enclave, New Delhi</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>1. Centre for Promotion of Social Concerns, 6, Vallabhai Road, Chokkikulam, Madurai, Tamil Nadu.</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. M/S Caruna Bal Vikash (CBV), Zachs Enclave First Floor, A-3, Second Avenue, Anna Nagar East, Chennai.</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As per FCRA database, 806 applications for renewal are pending as on 26th July 2018 for want of reports from security agencies and clarifications sought from the applicants.

This was stated by the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Shri Kiren Rijiju in a written reply to question in the Lok Sabha today.
Budget for Post Matric Scholarship for Scheduled Castes

Under Post Matric Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Castes students (PMS-SC), Central assistance is considered for release over and above the committed liability of States/UTs. As per existing guidelines of PMS-SC Scheme, the level of Committed Liability of respective State Government/UT administration in a New Finance Commission Cycle annually will be equivalent to the total of the demand in the terminal year of the previous Plan Period/Finance Commission cycle, provided that when a state has made no demand on the Centre in the terminal year or the demand made by State is lower than in any of the previous years of Plan period/Finance Commission cycle, in that case the highest demand made in any of the previous financial years of the Plan/Finance Commission cycle will be considered as demand for purpose of computation of Committed Liability. North Eastern States are exempted from Committed Liability.

Post Matric Scholarship Schemes to Scheduled Caste Students and Scheduled Tribe Students are two different schemes and for different target groups. The scheme is reviewed time to time and revised as per inter-ministerial consultation, availability of Budget and approval of Competent Authority. No time frame can be specified at this stage. Under Post Matric Scholarship Schemes to Scheduled Tribe Students, seventy five percent and twenty five percent of funds are shared by the Central Government and State Government respectively.

This information was given by Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Shri Vijay Sampla in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

*****

Sanjay Kumar/jk/SJ&E-4/31-7-2018

(Release ID: 1540791) Visitor Counter : 204

Read this release in: Urdu, Marathi, Tamil
Reservation for Scheduled Castes

Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment

Reservation for Scheduled Castes

Posted On: 31 JUL 2018 1:10PM by PIB Delhi

The Constitution of India provides proportionate representation to Scheduled Castes in House of People, Legislative Assemblies of the States, Panchayats and Municipalities. Reservation in admission to educational institutions and services under the State is also available to Scheduled Castes under the Constitution. The Supreme Court has held that reservation in educational institutions and services under the State for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes should not ordinarily exceed 50%.

This information was given by Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Shri Vijay Sampla in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

Sanjay Kumar/jk/SJ&E-2/31-7-2018

(Release ID: 1540790) Visitor Counter : 332

Read this release in: Urdu, Bengali, Tamil
Healthcare Facilities for Weaker Sections

Posted On: 31 JUL 2018 1:09PM by PIB Delhi

Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment implements Medical Aid Scheme with the objective to extend aid in the form of grants to the patients belonging to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes suffering from serious ailments requiring surgery of Kidney, Heart, Liver, Cancer and Brain or any other life threatening diseases including organ transplant and spinal surgery, whose annual family income is not more than Rs.3.0 lakh. The scheme is implemented through designated Hospitals in the country. The information about the scheme under the Dr. Ambedkar Foundation is disseminated through its website and Dr. Ambedkar Chairs established in different Universities in the country.

Public Health and Hospitals being a state subject, the primary responsibility of providing better healthcare facilities to all including weaker sections is that of respective State Government. Under National Health Mission (NHM) with its two sub Missions, National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and National Urban Health Mission (NUHM) technical and financial support is provided to States/UTs for provision of affordable, accessible and quality healthcare to all including weaker sections. Under NHM support is also provided for host of free services relating to maternal & child health, immunization, communicable disease control programmes, prevention and management of non-communicable diseases, strengthening health systems such as physical infrastructure, augmenting health human resource on contractual basis, free ambulances services, Free essential Drugs & Diagnostic, free dialysis services to the poor etc.

This information was given by Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Shri Vijay Sampla in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

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Sanjay Kumar/jk/SJ&E-1/31-7-2018

(Release ID: 1540788) Visitor Counter : 250

Read this release in: Urdu, Marathi, Bengali, Tamil
29 States/UTs have notified District Officers and constituted Local Complaint Committee under Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013: Dr. Virendra Kumar

Ministry of Women and Child Development

29 States/UTs have notified District Officers and constituted Local Complaint Committee under Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013: Dr. Virendra Kumar

Posted On: 30 JUL 2018 6:18PM by PIB Delhi

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 came into force on 9th December 2013. The Act covers all women, irrespective of their age or employment status and protects them against sexual harassment at all workplaces both in public and private sector, whether organized or unorganized. The Act mandates all the workplace having more than 10 workers to constitute Internal Complaint Committee (ICC) for receiving complaints of sexual harassment. Similarly, the Appropriate Government is authorized to constitute Local Complaint Committee (LCC) in every district which will receive complaints from organizations having less than 10 workers or if the complaint is against the employer himself.

So far, 29 States/UTs have notified District Officers and constituted Local Complaint Committee under Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

Ministry of Women and Child Development issues advisories from time to time to all States/UTs Government, Ministries/Departments in Government of India and leading business organisation Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Confederation of Indian Society, Chamber of Commerce & Industry (CCI), and National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) to ensure effective implementation of the Act.

Further, all Ministries/Departments of Government of India and States/UTs have been requested to organize workshops and awareness programmes in their Departments/Offices for sensitizing the employees about the provision of this Act. Besides, all States/UTs Governments have also been requested to advise the Secretary Industries/Commerce to organize similar workshops and awareness programmes each and every industry, business house, private sector entity of the States/UTs.

The Ministry has launched an online complaint management system titled Sexual Harassment electronic–Box (SHe-Box) for registering complaints related to sexual harassment at workplace of all women employees in the country, including government and private employees.

Apart from the above, in order to create wide spread awareness about the Act across the country, both in organized and unorganized sectors, Ministry of Women and Child Development has identified a pool of 223 Resource Institutions to provide capacity building programmes i.e. training, workshops, etc., on the issue of sexual harassment at workplace.

The above Information was given by Minister of State for Women and Child Development, DR. VIRENDRA KUMAR in reply to an Unstarred Question in the Lok Sabha, today.
1.07 crore rural houses constructed over the last four years under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin with the objective of “Housing for All by 2022”

Ministry of Rural Development

1.07 crore rural houses constructed over the last four years under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin with the objective of “Housing for All by 2022”

National Institute of Public Finance & Policy concludes average time for house construction under PMAY-G down to 114 days as against 314 days under erstwhile Indira Awaas Yojana

Posted On: 01 AUG 2018 3:55PM by PIB Delhi

The re-structured rural housing scheme Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) which has the objective of “Housing for All by 2022” was launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister on 20th November, 2016 from Agra. 2.95 crore houses are set to be constructed by 2022 to achieve the set objective of PMAY-G which has been decided to achieve in phases. In the first phase the target is construction of one crore pucca houses by 31st March, 2019.

A total of 1.07 crore rural houses have been completed over the last four years (2014-15 to 2017-18) which include completion of 38.20 lakh Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) houses and 68.64 lakh IAY houses that were sanctioned in 2014-15 and 2015-16 and prior to that. If the figures of the current financial year are also added to this achievement under the rural housing scheme the achievement from 2014-15 till date becomes 1.13 crore completed rural houses. The details of rural housing scheme and progress can be seen from the website of PMAY-G, i.e. (pmayg.nic.in). A summary of houses completed, as on 31.7.2018, which shows an upward swing, is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial year</th>
<th>Houses completed under IAY</th>
<th>Houses completed under PMAY-G</th>
<th>Total rural houses completed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>11.93</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>18.23</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>32.12</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>32.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-18</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>38.18</td>
<td>44.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-total</strong></td>
<td><strong>68.64</strong></td>
<td><strong>38.20</strong></td>
<td><strong>106.84</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-19</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>6.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>69.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>43.54</strong></td>
<td><strong>113.24</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(in lakh)
The confidence of completing 1 crore PMAY-G houses by March, 2019 also arises from the following which gives an idea about various stages towards completion of a PMAY-G house –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Figures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target under PMAY-G for 2016-17 to 2018-19</td>
<td>100 lakh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targets assigned to States / UTs</td>
<td>99.89 lakh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houses sanctioned</td>
<td>87.44 lakh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st instalment paid</td>
<td>81.26 lakh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd instalment paid</td>
<td>62.52 lakh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd instalment paid</td>
<td>49.17 lakh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House completed</td>
<td>43.54 lakh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*As on 31.07.2018*

The confidence on timely completion is further strengthened by a recent study conducted by National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), New Delhi, which has concluded that the average time of construction of a house under PMAY-G has gone down to 114 days as against 314 days under the erstwhile rural housing scheme, i.e. IAY. In view of the availability of 240 days till March, 2019, and keeping in view the current pace of construction of PMAY-G houses and various initiatives of the Ministry to closely track the progress of construction, the target of completion of 1.00 crore pucca houses under PMAY-G would be achieved by March, 2019. In this way Government would construct 1.70 crore rural houses between April, 2014 and March, 2019.

The completed PMAY-G houses are changing the rural landscape and bringing social transformation in villages across the country.

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APS/SNC/AS

(Release ID: 1541010) Visitor Counter : 182

Read this release in: Marathi
Adultery law violates the dignity of woman, says SC

The Bench said the provision treating women as 'chattel' was absurd.

The time has changed since it was commonly accepted that it is the man who is the seducer and not the woman, the Supreme Court said on Thursday, while questioning if the ‘archaic’ law on adultery would stand the test of right to equality.

A five-judge Constitution Bench, headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra, made the observation while hearing a case challenging the validity of the penal law, which makes adultery an offence punishable only for men and not the consenting women.

**Penal provisions**

Section 497 in the Indian Penal Code, which defines adultery, says that a man could be punished up to five years in jail if he has sexual intercourse with another man’s wife. However, it is not an offence if the sexual intercourse is with the “consent or connivance” of the husband of the woman.

The Bench, also comprising Justices R.F. Nariman, A.M. Khanwilkar, D.Y. Chandrachud and Indu Malhotra, said the IPC section treats a married woman as “chattel” (a personal possession) of the conniving husband, which was “absurd”. “When a woman is treated as chattel, her right to dignity is affected,” the Bench remarked.

The Bench also observed that decriminalising adultery was not “a licence for people to go indulge in it”.

It also remarked that adultery is a sign of marital breakdown as marriage as an institution has two pillars where both parties have to be equally responsible.

Advocate Kaleeswaram Raj, appearing for petitioner Joseph Shine, an Indian living in Italy, said adultery remains a ground for divorce in all personal laws.

“However, penalising adultery and jailing citizens for engaging in consensual sex is a different thing altogether. There is no compelling state interest or even a valid rationale for the state to do so,” Mr. Raj said.

Mr. Raj clarified that he was seeking to strike down the provisions as unconstitutional and looking to make its provisions gender neutral.

Senior counsel Meenakshi Arora said most countries have done away with adultery as a criminal offence, including Bhutan, Sri Lanka, China, South Korea.

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Managing perceptions: on amending the SC/ST Act

If we accept that politics is about pragmatism, about managing perceptions, about defusing difficult situations, and keeping a sharp eye out on the prevailing political winds, then the **Union Cabinet’s decision to amend the provisions of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act** appears both reasonable and unavoidable. It is arguable that no dispensation at the Centre could have ignored the massive Scheduled Caste protests against the Supreme Court verdict that was perceived as diluting the provisions of the 1989 law. With the call for a nationwide shutdown on August 9, one that an NDA constituent, the Lok Janshakti Party led by Ram Vilas Paswan, had threatened to join, the Centre was goaded into acting quickly. The proposed amendments are aimed at undoing three new rules laid down by the court: that the bar on anticipatory bail under the Act need not prevent courts from granting advance bail if there is no merit in a complaint; that there can be an arrest only if the appointing authority (in the case of public servants) or the district superintendent of police (in the case of others) approves such arrest; and that there should be a preliminary inquiry into complaints. What they do is state that the bar on anticipatory bail will remain “notwithstanding any judgment or order of any court”, that there will be no need for a preliminary inquiry before an FIR is registered and that no approval is required before someone is arrested under the Act.

From the very beginning it was clear that the entire issue had less to do with the correctness of the Supreme Court judgment and more to do with the way it was interpreted, and sometimes deliberately misinterpreted. The judgment had not altered or read down any of the key provisions of the Act. The Court was at pains to emphasise that it was only seeking to protect the innocent against arbitrary arrest and that there should be no denial of relief and compensation to SCs and STs, whose rights should be protected. While no one can object to procedural safeguards against false accusations, it is possible that the Court’s concerns about what it saw as misuse of the Act resulted in the perception that it was introducing norms to prevent quick action on complaints. It is arguably much more likely that such perceptions consolidate at a time when the conviction rate under the Act is dismally low and atrocities against Dalits are a disturbing reality. It is vital that any law that is founded on punishing social ostracisation maintains a fine balance between protecting the rights of the individual to a fair trial and enforcing not only the letter but also the spirit of a legislation that was introduced to protect the dignity of the disadvantaged, who have suffered unspeakably as a result of the abhorrent practice of social discrimination.

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The U.S. policy of separating children from undocumented migrant parents is cruel

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India must have a strong law in favour of Dalits

What good does a toughly worded law do if it is rendered toothless on the ground?

This question has roiled India since the Supreme Court struck down key provisions of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, on March 20, banning automatic FIRs, arrests and providing for anticipatory bail provisions. The decision immediately sparked violent protests by Dalit groups, who saw the judgment as a dilution of the only law protecting them against bias and discrimination. After months of criticism by Dalits, opposition parties, even some members of the ruling coalition, the Union Cabinet cleared a bill effectively rolling back the top court’s changes, and restoring the original version of the act.

The decision is unlikely to drastically change ground-level implementation of the law, which is hobbled by widespread bias against SC/ST communities. The conviction rate under the law was around 16% in 2016, according to the National Crime Records Bureau, and was in single digits in states such as Karnataka. The difference in social standing between the accused, who are from dominant communities, and poor Dalit complainants, ensures that police investigations often collapse, and the cases don’t end up in conviction. Even cases of major atrocities, such as the Laxmanpur Bathe massacre in Bihar in 1997 which killed 58 people, don’t end in convictions.

But in a country as diverse and complex as India, the impact of a law cannot be gauged merely with data. The importance of the SC/ST Act lies in symbolism and the notion of power and dignity it bestows on Dalits and tribals. After it was introduced in 1989, the SC/ST Act fundamentally altered the power structure between castes, especially in rural areas where upper castes have a stranglehold on police and political power. For the first time, a poor landless labourer could file a case against his landed master without getting cowed by the police and local, upper-caste muscle power. This is why the SC/ST Act bred widespread resentment among upper caste communities, who, for the first time, faced a challenge from men and women they had never considered their equal.

The situation is not unlike Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code that criminalises consensual same-sex acts. Activists opposing the British-era law say prejudice against the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community is unlikely to vanish soon, but add that the reading down of the law is essential to beginning the process of ending discrimination. Similarly, the SC/ST Act might not always result in a conviction, but its presence is required to prevent upper-caste aggression in a country where caste power and brutality are grim realities.

First Published: Aug 02, 2018 19:24 IST
195 One Stop Centres are functional in the country to support women-affected by violence

Ministry of Women and Child Development

195 One Stop Centres are functional in the country to support women-affected by violence

Ministry has approved setting up of five more One Stop Centres: DR. VIRENDRA KUMAR

Posted On: 02 AUG 2018 5:58PM by PIB Delhi

The Ministry is implementing Scheme for setting up One Stop Centre since 1st April 2015 to support women-affected by violence. Under the scheme, it has been envisaged that One Stop Centre would be set up in every district across the country in phased manner. So far, 195 One Stop Centres are functional in the country to provide single window services such as medical aid, police assistance, legal aid/case management, psychosocial counseling and temporary shelter to women affected by violence.

Ministry has approved setting up of five One Stop Centres at Thiruvanatapuram, Thissur, Mallapuram, Kannur, Wayanad districts of Kerala.

The above Information was given by Minister of State for Women and Child Development, DR. VIRENDRA KUMAR in reply to an Unstarred Question in the Rajya Sabha, today.

NB/PS

(Release ID: 1541381) Visitor Counter : 145
Government strictly complies with the rules of CEI Act, 2006 which provides reservation for SC, ST & OBC students

Posted On: 02 AUG 2018 5:45PM by PIB Delhi

The Central Educational Institutions(CEIs) (Reservation in Admission) Act, 2006 provides for the reservation of students belonging to the Scheduled Castes (SCs)/ Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) of citizens to the extent of 15%, 7.5% and 27%, respectively, in Central Educational Institutions (CEIs) established, maintained or aided by the Central Government subject to exceptions provided under Section 4 of the Act and subject to special provisions for regions specified in the amendment to the Act in 2012. The implementation of the provisions of the CEI Act, 2006 in Central Educational Institutions is being followed in letter and spirit.

As per All India Survey of Higher Education reports, enrolment of students in Masters and M.Phil./Ph.D. programmes has been showing constant increase every year. The increase noticed after the implementation of UGC M.Phil/Ph.D regulations, 2016 was particularly high in comparison to previous years. Year-wise comparison is as under:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Student Enrolment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>117301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>126451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>141037</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This information was given by the Minister of State (HRD), Dr. Satya Pal Singh today in a written reply to a Rajya Sabha question.

*****

NB/AKJ/YP/AK/RS-1857

(Release ID: 1541364) Visitor Counter : 201
37 Central Ministries/Department have been allocated funds under STC for 299 Tribal Schemes

Ministry of Tribal Affairs

37 Central Ministries/Department have been allocated funds under STC for 299 Tribal Schemes

Posted On: 02 AUG 2018 5:33PM by PIB Delhi

Tribal Sub Plan (TSP), now called Scheduled Tribe Component (STC) Strategy was adopted for accelerated development of tribal people. It envisages channelizing the flow of outlays & benefits from all sectors of development to ST population. STC is a multi-pronged strategy which includes support for education, health, sanitation, water supply, livelihood etc. Major part of infrastructure development in tribal dominated areas and provision of basic amenities to tribal people in the country is carried out through various schemes / programmes of concerned Central Ministries and the State Governments concerned, while the Ministry of Tribal Affairs provides additive to these initiatives by way of plugging gaps.

Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) has issued revised norms on 26.12.2017 for allocation of STC by Central Ministries / Departments. As per Union Budget 2018-19, there are 37 Central Ministries and Departments having STC funds catering to specific tribal development in various sectors through 299 different schemes.

So far as State TSP is concerned, as per extant Guidelines, State Governments are to allocate funds under TSP out of total Plan/Scheme Outlays not less than the population proportion of STs in State as per 2011 Census.

This information was given by the Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Shri. Jaswantsinh Bhabhor in Rajya Sabha today.

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NB/RN

(Release ID: 1541343) Visitor Counter : 96
Inclusion of Castes in ST List

Posted On: 02 AUG 2018 5:31PM by PIB Delhi

The Government of India on 15.6.1999 (further amended on 25.6.2002) has laid down modalities for determining claims for inclusion in and other modifications in the lists of Scheduled Tribes. According to these, only those proposals recommended and justified by State Government / UT Administration concerned and concurred with by Registrar General of India (RGI) and National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) are considered for amendment of legislation. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has not received any proposal from Government of Odisha for inclusion of Kudmi and Routia tribes in the list of Scheduled Tribes of Odisha. As per extant modalities, recommendation of State Government is a pre-requisite, to process the proposal further.

This information was given by the Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Shri. Sudarshan Bhagat in Rajya Sabha today.

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NB/RN

(Release ID: 1541337) Visitor Counter : 141
Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana

Posted On: 02 AUG 2018 5:13PM by PIB Delhi

Under the Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY), 478 and 218 Members of Parliament have identified Gram Panchayats, under Phase-II and Phase-III respectively as on 25 July 2018. 32 and 22 union ministers have identified Gram Panchayats, under Phase-II and Phase-III respectively under Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) as on 25 July 2018. The details are available on the SAGY website (saanjhi.gov.in) and can be accessed using the respective logins of MPs. This information was provided by the Minister of State for Rural Development, Shri Ram Kripal Yadav today in a written reply to a Lok Sabha question.

The Union Minister of Rural Development had requested all the Members of Parliament to identify Gram Panchayats under SAGY. Reminders in this regard were also issued. The newly elected MPs were also requested to identify Gram Panchayats under SAGY. Further, the Minister of Rural Development has written to all the Chief Ministers requesting their attention for ensuring effective implementation of SAGY. The following initiatives have been inter alia taken for better implementation of the Scheme:

- The guidelines of as many as 22 Central Schemes have been amended or enabled to accord priority for the SAGY Gram Panchayats. A compilation of 223 Central Sector/ Centrally Sponsored and 1,806 State Schemes for convergence under SAGY for the benefit of Members of Parliament, District and Village level officials has been prepared. Ministry has also published a document named ‘SAHYOG’ as an indicative guidance document with the essential information on the existing social security schemes collated from respective Ministries to enrich the knowledge of villagers and village level functionaries to achieve 100% enrollment into the social/ financial Security Schemes in SAGY Gram Panchayats.
- Developed a 35 point outcome indicator covering basic amenities, education, health, sanitation, livelihood, women empowerment, financial inclusion, food security, social security and e-governance to gauge the impact of SAGY in the Gram Panchayats.
- Coordinated with other Central Ministries/ Departments for ensuring provision of four key basic services viz. power, drinking water, roads and education in all SAGY Gram Panchayats.
- Recognising that the implementation of SAGY requires highly motivated and knowledgeable personnel, the Ministry organised capacity building exercises for 373 SAGY functionaries from the Phase-II/III Gram Panchayats during April-June 2018.
- The Ministry has circulated suggestive template to state governments for preparing proposals
for tapping support from Private, Voluntary and Cooperative (PVC) sectors. The proposals received from States/UTs have been displayed on the SAGY website for wider circulation. Further, Ministry has met with the representatives of Industry and Professional Associations linked with Ministry of Corporate Affairs and oriented them on the opportunities presented by SAGY, Mission Antyodaya and other schemes for converging private / corporate investments with the government initiatives for the development of villages.

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APS/SNC/AS

(Release ID: 1541323) Visitor Counter : 346

END
Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana achieves 5 core mark

Posted On: 03 AUG 2018 5:22PM by PIB Delhi

Loksabha Speaker Smt Sumitra Mahajan here today handed over 5 croreth LPG connection under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) to Smt Takrdiran of Delhi in the Parliament House. Speaker Smt. Sumitra Mahajan while acknowledging the vision of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and leadership of Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas Shri Dharmendra Pradhan appreciated the collective efforts of the officials of Ministry and the Oil Marketing Companies in achieving the target of 5 crores. Further, shared advantages of using LPG in terms of health benefits, time saved and ensuring safety of women.

Modi Government launched Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) on 1st May, 2016 and it is implemented by Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas through its Oil Marketing Companies i.e., IOC, BPCL and HPCL through their network of distributors across the country. Through PMUY, initially, 5 crore BPL households were targeted for providing deposit free LPG connections to BPL households by 31st March,2019. In a record time of 28 months for its launch, PMUY achieved the initial target of providing 5 crores LPG connection to BPL households. In the current year, considering the huge success of the Scheme, target was revised to 8 crores with budgetary allocation of Rs 12,800 crore.

States of Uttar Pradesh (87 lakh), West Bengal (67 lakh), Bihar (61 lakh), Madhya Pradesh (45 lakh), Rajasthan (37 lakh) and Odisha (30 lakh) have accounted for nearly 65% of the connections provided. 47% of the beneficiaries are from the weaker sections of the society i.e., SC/STs.

PMUY has been recognised by World Health Organisation as one of the decisive intervention by the Government to address the Indoor Air Pollution which accounts for nearly 10 lakh deaths in a year in the country.

PMUY aims at providing clean-cooking fuel to the poor households, which are otherwise vulnerable to various health hazards associated with indoor air pollution and bringing in qualitative changes in the living standards. PMUY is under implementation in the all the States/UTs. Beneficiaries are identified through Socio-Economic Caste Census List-2011 and in such cases where names are not covered under SECC list, beneficiaries are identified from seven categories which includes SC/ST households, beneficiaries of PMAY(gramin), Antyodaya Anna Yojana, Most Backward Classes, Forest Dwellers, Resident of Islands/River Islands and Tea Garden & Ex-tea Garden Tribes.

**********

AD/ KSR
The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, on Thursday reviewed progress of key infrastructure sectors of roads, PMGSY, rural housing, urban housing, railways, airports and ports. The review meeting, which lasted for nearly two hours, was attended by top officials from infrastructure-related Ministries, NITI Aayog, and PMO.

In course of the presentation made by CEO NITI Aayog, Shri Amitabh Kant, it was noted that the pace of road construction has picked up significantly. The average road length constructed per day in FY 17-18 was 26.93 km, as compared to 11.67 km in FY 13-14.

The Prime Minister was informed about progress made in digitisation of the transport sector. Over 24 lakh RFID tags have been issued so far, and over 22 percent of toll revenue now comes from electronic toll collection. The "Sukhad Yatra" App, which provides information about road conditions, and facilitates lodging of complaints, has seen over one lakh downloads so far. The Prime Minister called for faster progress in electronic toll collection.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, rural roads have now connected 88 percent of all eligible habitations. Over 44,000 villages have been connected in the period from 2014 to 2018, as compared to about 35,000 in the preceding four year period. The "MeriSadak" App has been launched in 10 regional languages, and has seen 9.76 lakh downloads so far. GIS Mapping of roads is underway, and 20 States have so far been hosted on the Geospatial Rural Road Information System (GRRIS). Green technologies, and non-conventional materials such as waste plastic and fly ash, are being used in rural road construction.

In the railways sector, there has been significant addition in capacity and rolling stock. Additions in "new lines, doubling and gauge conversion" between 2014 and 2018, was to the extent of 9528 kilometres, which is 56 percent higher than the preceding four year period.

Similarly, in the aviation sector, passenger traffic has grown by over 62 percent in the four year period between 2014 and 2018, as against 18 percent in the preceding four year period. Under the UDAN scheme, 27 airports are now operational in tier 2 and tier 3 cities.

In the urban housing, emphasis is being laid on new construction technologies. 54 lakh houses have
been sanctioned under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (Urban), since the inception of the scheme.

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AKT/VJ/AK

(Release ID: 1541447) Visitor Counter : 739

Read this release in: Urdu, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil

END

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Rs. 2,919.55 Crores under the Nirbhaya Fund for eight major cities to make them safer for women: DR. VIRENDRA KUMAR

Ministry of Women and Child Development

The Government has recently appraised projects on safe city worth Rs. 2,919.55 Crores under the Nirbhaya Fund for eight major cities of the country to make them safer for women. The city-wise details are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Appraised amount in Cr.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>663.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mumbai</td>
<td>252.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chennai</td>
<td>425.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmedabad</td>
<td>253.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolkata</td>
<td>181.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengaluru</td>
<td>667.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyderabad</td>
<td>282.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucknow</td>
<td>195.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,919.55</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The plans for these city-level projects have been prepared in coordination with Municipal Corporations and Police Commissionerate of the cities. The objective is to make the cities safer for women by addressing different aspects such as street lighting, safer public transport, improved policing etc. The details of the Proposals are as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>City &amp; Amount Appraised</th>
<th>Details of the proposals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Delhi (NCT) of Rs.663.67 Cr</td>
<td>The project aims at enhancing the safety of women in public places like roads, parks, markets, schools, metro stations, etc. The project leverages latest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mumbai</td>
<td>Rs.252 Cr.</td>
<td>Technology such as video monitoring, facial recognition analytics, person tracking, automatic number plate recognition, dedicated women safety patrol vans equipped with dashboards for viewing live feeds, GPS tracking, on-board video feed sharing, etc. for women's safety. The project will cover about 3,700 locations in Delhi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chennai</td>
<td>Rs. 425 Cr.</td>
<td>The project involves GIS mapping of criminal hotspots, video surveillance, training of investigating officers, prosecutors and judicial officers, community policing and quick response police teams. The project will also strengthen the Police Didi program wherein female police officers interact with women living in slums on the issue of sexual harassment and abuse. It is also proposed to spread awareness through media campaigns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmedabad</td>
<td>Rs.253 Cr.</td>
<td>The project includes creation of safe-zone clusters at hot crime zones, surveillance technology, GIS based crime mapping, security in public transport, better sanitation facilities for women, remote monitoring of city lighting, capacity building of police authorities as well as a helpdesk service for women. A Cyber Crime &amp; Legal Assistance Compensation Lab will also be set up under this project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolkata</td>
<td>Rs.181.32 Cr.</td>
<td>The proposal includes strengthening of 9 women police stations, surveillance in public areas, Computer Aided Dispatch based emergency response system for dial-100 in cases of women, in-camera testimonies in all Crime Courts. The project will undertake sensitization programmes especially for boys as well as mass behavioral &amp; cultural change campaign on women's safety etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengaluru</td>
<td>Rs.667 Cr.</td>
<td>The proposal involves surveillance at public places, quick response police vehicles, placement of NGO volunteers at Women's Helpdesk in Police Stations and Critical Care Response Units at leading Hospitals, setting up of an Integrated Support Center for women and children in need, GIS based crime mapping and analytics, Women Police Outposts near schools, colleges, bus stands etc.,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>Proposal Details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyderabad</td>
<td>The proposal involves setting up of a Centre for Development and Empowerment of Women as well as a Forensic Cell and Repeat Offenders Monitoring Cell. It also envisages setting up of SHE Toilets for women as well as Transit Dorms for safe temporary accommodation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucknow</td>
<td>The proposal incorporates features like cyber and forensics infrastructure for better investigation of crimes against women, manpower training in the police force. It envisions the creation of a comprehensive Safe City Eco System by also sensitizing all the various stakeholders in the city such as hawkers, shopkeepers, waiters, public servants etc. on issues of women.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: Rs. 2,919.55 Cr. Projects for 8 cities

The above Information was given by Minister of State for Women and Child Development, DR. VIRENDRA KUMAR in reply to an Unstarred Question in the LokSabha, today.

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NB/PS

(Release ID: 1541560) Visitor Counter : 136
Government is keen to provide quality education to the Students belonging to Minority Communities

NMDFC helps Students of Delhi United Christians Sr. Secondary School

Posted On: 04 AUG 2018 1:25PM by PIB Delhi

Union Minister for Minority Affairs has said that the Central Government is very serious to provide quality education to the boys and girls belonging to Minority Communities. After dedicating a Computer Center for the students of Delhi United Christian Senior Secondary School, Shri Naqvi said that the Government has provided scholarships to more than two crore fifty lakh students belonging to minority communities, during past four years.

The National Minorities Development & Finance Corporation (NMDFC) working under the aegis of the Ministry of Minority Affairs, Govt. of India has extended its helping hand for the Delhi United Christian Senior Secondary School by refurbishing their Computer Centre and also providing water coolers with in-built RO system for ensuring safe drinking water, on 4th August, 2018. This support is being extended under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme of NMDFC. This could be possible due to farsightedness and dynamic leadership of Sh. Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, Hon’ble Minister of Minority Affairs, Govt. of India.

Shri Naqvi, while addressing the students, appreciated the initiative of NMDFC in reaching out to schools under CSR programme and extending much needed support to students who deserve such facilities in the schools. He assured the students of the school that the Government is committed to “Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas” philosophy. Therefore they should avail the benefits of a variety of educational support schemes being run by the Ministry of Minority Affairs & other Govt. schemes.

Mohammad Shahbaz Ali, CMD, NMDFC on this occasion informed that endeavour of NMDFC under its CSR programme is to extend a helping hand to children of disadvantaged groups to acquire knowledge of Computers, to fulfil the vision of the Government of Digital India. He also appreciated the management of the school in extending education to disadvantaged category students.

Shri Santosh Kumar, Principal DUCSSS expressed his gratitude to the Union Minister for Minority Affairs and the NMDFC for helping & visiting the school. He thanked NMDFC for extending this...
support and assured that it would help the poor children in keeping abreast with the computers & information technology.

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JN/FH

(Release ID: 1541622) Visitor Counter : 318

Read this release in: Tamil

END

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Protesters in Gurugram participating in the Bharat Bandh held on April 2 against the SC ruling on the SC/ST Act. PTI

The Lok Sabha on Monday passed the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2018, to bypass the recent ruling of the Supreme Court laying down procedures for arrests under the Act. The Bill will now go to the Upper House.

The Bill inserts section 18A (1) (a) in the 1989 Act, that says a “preliminary enquiry shall not be required for registration of an FIR against any person.” The Bill also inserts Section 18A (1) (b), which says “the investigating officer shall not require approval for the arrest, if necessary, of any person against whom an accusation of having committed an offence under this Act has been made and no procedure, other than that provided under this Act or the Code, shall apply.”

The Bill’s Statement of Objects and Reasons says that under the CrPC, the decision to arrest a person is taken by the investigating officer and there was no requirement for approval. The Bill also goes back to the original SC/ST (PoA) Bill, doing away with the provision of anticipatory bail the Supreme Court ruling had permitted.

“The provision of section 438 of the Code shall not apply to a case under this Act, notwithstanding any judgment or order or direction of any Court,” says section 18A (2) of the Bill. Section 438 of the CrPC deals with direction for grant of bail to a person apprehending arrest.

The Supreme Court had on March 20, 2018, introduced protective provisions in the SC/ST (PoA) Act, 1989, to permit anticipatory bail — despite a section of the Act denying it — and laying down a preliminary enquiry by police before any action is taken. It had also laid down that the permission of the appointing authority would be required to arrest a public servant and that of an SSP for the arrest of a person who is not a public servant.

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Almost half of the districts in India are not on track to reduce the mortality rates of newborns and meet the target set under the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, a study has found.

India still has the world’s highest number of deaths among children under five and newborns, around 1.1 million per year.

The study, by Jayanta Bora and Nandita Saikia from Austria-based non-profit International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, is the first to evaluate neonatal and under-five mortality at a district level in India, as well as a state level.

Under the World Health Organization’s Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG3), all countries should aim to reduce neonatal mortality to 12 deaths per 1,000 live births per year, and under-five mortality to a maximum of 25. Researchers used data from the National Family Health Survey, a survey of the full birth history of women aged 15-49, carried out most recently in 2015-16, and used the data from the previous round conducted in 2005-06 to model future trends.

They found that the various measures employed in India have cut the number of deaths of under-fives by around half in in the past 23 years, from 109 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to around 50 in 2013, but this is still double the target.

The number of neonatal deaths remains around 2.4 times higher than the target, at around 29 deaths per 1,000 live births. The picture, however, is very complex. For example, the under-five mortality rate for boys in the South West district of Delhi is 6.3 per 1,000 live births, well within SDG3 targets.

However, in Rayagada in Odisha, the mortality rate is 141.7. The researchers found that just nine per cent of districts in India overall have so far reached the SDG3 targets for neonatal mortality, with 14 per cent reaching the targets for under-five mortality.

The vast majority of the worst performing states on mortality rates are in the poorer states of north-central and eastern India, although there are some high-risk districts in richer, more developed states such as Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat.

Almost all districts in the most populous states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh will fail to achieve the SDG3 goal on neonatal mortality. In Uttar Pradesh, the research showed that not a single district would meet the target for under-five mortality.

There is also some variation between genders. The female neonatal mortality rate is below that of males, which is expected as this is the global trend. However, this is not the case with under-five mortality, indicating gender discrimination.

“The state-level mortality rate does not reflect the inter-district variation in neonatal or under-five
mortality rates,” said Bora. “While some districts of a particular state may already have achieved the Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG3) target 15 years in advance, some districts will not achieve this even by the 2030 target time. Mortality rates vary enormously across the districts.”

Much of the variation is likely due to socioeconomic and geographic disparities. District-level female literacy rates vary from 24-89 per cent while urbanisation ranges from 0-100 per cent.

There are also large differences in the implementation of mortality reduction schemes and the accessibility and availability of healthcare. “It is important to note that India experienced the highest reduction in mortality rate in the period 2005-2016. Therefore, to achieve the SDG-related mortality goals at the district level, it needs to intervene more rigorously than ever,” said Saikia. “The majority of Indian districts need to make a giant leap to reduce their neonatal and under-five mortality rates.”

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Hormone needed for pregnant women

Samples were referred to the International Blood Group Reference Laboratory (IBGRL), Bristol, U.K., for serological test.

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END
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment

Assistive Living Devices Given by M/o Social Justice & Empowerment to Senior Citizens

Posted On: 07 AUG 2018 5:21PM by PIB Delhi

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has been implementing a scheme for providing physical aids and Assisted Living Devices for Senior Citizens belonging to BPL category named “Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY)” since 1st April, 2017 with the objective of providing Senior Citizens, belonging to BPL category and suffering from age related disabilities/ infirmities, with such physical aids and assisted living devices which can restore near normalcy in their bodily functions. Under the Scheme, assisted living devices such as Walking Sticks, Elbow Crutches, Walkers/ Crutches, Tripods/ Quadpods, Hearing Aids, Wheelchairs, Artificial Dentures and Spectacles are provided free of cost to the beneficiary senior citizens.

The Scheme is being implemented through the “Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation (ALIMCO)”, a Public Sector Undertaking under this Ministry, as the sole Implementing Agency. The devices are distributed in the camp mode. The beneficiaries are identified through Assessment Camps organised in collaboration with the respective State Government/District Administration and the devices are distributed in Distribution Camps organised in the selected districts. The Scheme is being funded from Senior Citizens’ Welfare Fund (SCWF). So far, a total of 292 districts have been selected including Aspirational and Backward districts from all States/UTs for the implementation of the RVY Scheme. As on date, 46 Distribution Camps have been organised at district level distributing 112380 aids and assistive devices to 49184 Senior Citizens.

This information was given by Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Shri Vijay Sampla in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

*****

Sanjay Kumar/jk/SJ&E-2/07-08-2018

(Release ID: 1541947) Visitor Counter : 105

END
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment

Financial Assistance Given by M/o Social Justice & Empowerment to Non-Governmental Organisations

Posted On: 07 AUG 2018 5:20PM by PIB Delhi

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment released Grant-in-aid to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) under the following schemes:

I. Scheme of Assistance to NGOs working for the welfare of Scheduled Castes.

II. Scheme of Assistance for Skill Development of Other Backward Classes (OBCs)/Economically Backward Classes (EBCs)/ De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNTs).

- III. Free Coaching for SC and OBC Students.
- IV. Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhattrawas Yojana (BJRCY)- For Boys and Girls

I. Scheme of Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSrC)

- VI. Scheme of Assistance for Prevention of Alcoholism and Substance (Drugs) Abuse.

I. Scheme of Assistance to Disabled for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP)
   II. Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS).

The NGOs receiving grants under the schemes of Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment are required to give an undertaking that they will conform to the reservation policy of the Government.

The sanction letter for funds released to the NGOs also incorporates a clause that grantee NGOs will conform to the reservation policy of the Government.

This information was given by Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Shri Vijay Sampla in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

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Sanjay Kumar/jk/SJ&E-1/07-08-2018
Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana

Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) was launched on 9th May, 2015 with a view to enhance the level of insurance penetration in the country and to provide insurance cover to common people especially poor and the Under-privileged Sections of the society. The enrolments under PMSBY have gradually increased since its launch. As on 31st July 2018, 13.74 crore people have been covered under PMSBY across the country.

The details of enrolments under the scheme are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PMSBY</th>
<th>2015-16</th>
<th>2016-17</th>
<th>2017-18*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gross enrolment (in crore)</td>
<td>9.43</td>
<td>10.04</td>
<td>13.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Figures as on 31st July, 2018.

The steps that have been taken by the Government to increase the awareness among the people to attract towards the scheme are as under:-

i) The Government as well as the Public Sector Insurance Companies and Banks had organized massive campaign through media to create awareness amongst large sections of population and also carried outreach efforts to facilitate access to the schemes.

ii) Regular advertisements about PMSBY are being carried-out in the newspapers, TV and radio.

iii) An exclusive website [www.jansuraksha.gov.in](http://www.jansuraksha.gov.in), which hosts all relevant material / information including forms, rules, frequently asked questions (FAQs) etc. related to this Scheme in English, Hindi and Regional Languages was created.

iv) Posters and banners have been displayed regarding the Scheme in various offices of Banks and Insurance Companies across the country.

v) Public Sector General Insurance Companies (PSGICs) and Banks had coordinated with State Governments and put up camps at 50 locations across the country for publicizing and increasing enrollments under PMSBY during the Mudra Campaign held in October, 2017.
vi) A Special Campaign Gram Swaraj Abhiyan was organized from 14th April, 2018 to 5th May, 2018 and further extended from 1st June, 2018 to 15th August, 2018 targeting poor households for providing universal coverage under PMSBY wherein the PSGICs and banks have been putting up stalls to enroll people in such Schemes. Under the Gram Swaraj Campaign, 44,15,817 people have been enrolled under PMSBY.

vii) The progress of settlement of claims under this Scheme is monitored regularly by the Government. Any complaints in respect of the Scheme are dealt in coordination with banks and insurance companies in getting it resolved expeditiously.

This was stated by Shri Shiv Pratap Shukla, Minister of State for Finance in a Written Reply to a Question in Rajya Sabha today.

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DSM/KA

(Release ID: 1541986) Visitor Counter : 656
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment

Parliament Passes Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2018

The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2018 which was passed by the Lok Sabha on 6th August 2018, has been passed by the Rajya Sabha today. Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot today moved the Amendment Bill, 2018 in Rajya Sabha.

Point-wise details: Section 18A has been inserted to nullify conduct of a preliminary enquiry before registration of an FIR, or to seek approval of any authority prior to arrest of an accused, and to restore the provisions of Section 18 of the Act.

Section 18A, inserted in the Act, states that:-

(1) For the purpose of the PoA Act,-

(a) preliminary enquiry shall not be required for registration of a First Information Report against any person; or

(b) the investigating officer shall not require approval for arrest, if necessary, of any person, against whom an accusation of having committed an offence under the PoA Act has been made and no procedure other than provided under the PoA Act or the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, shall apply.

(2) The provision of section 438 of the Code shall not apply to a case under the Act, notwithstanding any judgment or order or direction of any Court.

Background: The directions of Hon’ble Supreme Court in their judgment dated 20.03.2018 in Criminal Appeal No. 416 of 2018(Dr. Subhash Kashinath Mahajan Vs the State of Maharashtra and Another) amount to amending the PoA Act and have diluted the provisions of the PoA Act.

The directions of the Hon’ble Court to conduct a preliminary inquiry within seven days by the Dy. S.P. concerned to find out whether the allegations make out a case under the PoA Act and that arrest in appropriate cases may be made only after approval by the S.S.P., would delay registration of First Information Report (FIR) and will impede strict enforcement of the provision of the POA Act. It may also be difficult to get the preliminary inquiry conducted within seven days as sufficient number of Dy. S.P level officers are usually not in place. Typically, the Dy. S.P. are
located at the district level and not at taluk/block level. Other repercussions of the said directions of the Hon'ble Court are that delay in registration of FIR would result in delay in payment of admissible relief amount to the victims of atrocities admissible only on registration of FIR.

All this would adversely affect the very objective of the Act to prevent commission of atrocities against members of SC and ST and be severely detrimental especially in heinous offences like sexual exploitation of SC/ST women including rape, gangrape, acid attacks and murder etc.

This matter being of very sensitive nature had caused a lot of unrest and a sense of disharmony in the country. As such, a Review Petition dated 02.04.2018, was filed by the Union of India in the Hon‘ble Court praying for recalling and reviewing their Order but no relief had so far been granted.

Hence, it was considered expedient and meaningful to reaffirm the reliance and trust of members of SCs and STs on the provisions of the PoA Act.

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Sanjay Kumar/jk/MoSJE/09.08.2018
Reactions from various forums have been received in regard to effects of the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court on the deterrence of the The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities){PoA} Act, 1989.

Since the Judgment dated 20.03.2018 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Criminal Appeal No. 416 of 2018(Dr. Subhash Kashinath Mahajan Vs the State of Maharashtra and Another) has bearing on the effectiveness of the PoA Act, the Union of India had filed a Review Petition (Crl.) on 02.04.2018 in the Hon'ble Court, praying for reviewing the judgment and recalling the directions and the matter is sub-judice in the court.

The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2018, has been passed in the Lok Sabha on 06.08.2018, to amend the provisions of the Act in order to restore its effectiveness.

This information was given by Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Shri Ramdas Athawale in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today.

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Sanjay Kumar/jk/SJ&E-2/09-08-2017

(Release ID: 1542218) Visitor Counter : 187
The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2018 overrides a March 20 judgment of the Supreme Court, which restricted the powers of the police under the Code of Criminal Procedure to arrest a suspect. The verdict also read down a specific bar in the Atrocities Act of 1989 against anticipatory bail. Accused persons were not allowed to seek anticipatory bail to thwart arrest.

The judgment reasoned that many false cases are foisted on innocent persons under the 1989 Act and that the fundamental right of an innocent person to be protected from arbitrary arrest should be protected. For this, the court ordered that a Deputy Superintendent of Police should conduct a “preliminary inquiry” into every complaint of atrocity committed against an SC/ST member. Subsequently, the arrest of the accused persons should be approved by the Senior Superintendent of Police concerned. The judgment had led to widespread violence and loss of lives across the country, following which the government moved the Supreme Court for a review.

The 2018 Bill, passed by the Lok Sabha even as the government’s review petition is pending in the Supreme Court, overcomes the March 20 judgment by amending the 1989 Act to introduce Section 18A. This provision does away with the need for a preliminary inquiry or requirement for an investigating officer to take prior approval from his superior before registering an FIR on a complaint under the Act.

The statement of objects and reasons of the Bill highlights that the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure provide that information relating to commission of an offence should be recorded if the probe officer has “reason to suspect the commission of an offence”. The investigating officer can arrest a person and there is no requirement of conducting a preliminary inquiry before recording information.

The principles of criminal jurisprudence and Section 41 of the Code of Criminal Procedure imply that once the investigating officer has reasons to suspect that an offence has been committed, he can arrest an accused. This decision to arrest or not to arrest cannot be taken away from the investigating officer.

The Bill brings back the bar on accused seeking anticipatory bail. It says the provision of Section 438 (anticipatory bail) of the Code shall not apply to a case under this Act, notwithstanding any judgment/order of any court.

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This refers to the tendency to form friendships and other forms of interpersonal relationships with people we come across often in our daily lives.

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DOES THE ANTI-TRAFFICKING BILL ADDRESS TRAFFICKING?


Representational image.

The Bill goes beyond criminalisation; it tries to combat the organised nature of trafficking

India took a giant step towards the protection of its women and children when the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act was passed by the Lok Sabha in 2013. Section 370 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was substituted with Sections 370 and 370A, which defined trafficking and laid out the punishment for it. However, mere criminalisation of trafficking is not enough — several laws have not been implemented in letter and spirit in the absence of a comprehensive legislative framework. In the case of trafficking, data show that despite the 2013 law, there has been an increase in the number of victims of human trafficking. It is to tackle this menace that the comprehensive Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018, was passed. Instead of mere criminalisation, the Bill seeks to systematically combat the organised nature of trafficking.

Multipronged approach

The Bill ties together the approaches of prevention, rescue and rehabilitation to create a robust policy framework against trafficking. It places at its core the rights and welfare of victims of human trafficking. There are aggravated forms of trafficking which have been introduced, such as trafficking for the purpose of begging, or bearing a child, or for the purpose of marriage or under the pretext of marriage by administering narcotic drugs, hormones, or chemical substances for the purposes of early sexual maturity, and so on. Under the Bill, prosecution under these offences will be made timely and efficient by special public prosecutors.

The Bill provides protection to witnesses. It also seeks to maintain the confidentiality of victims by recording their statements through video conferencing and by in camera proceedings. It states that there will be time-bound trials and repatriation of victims.

A rehabilitation fund has been introduced for the first time. This will be used for the physical, psychological and social well-being of victims. The Bill seeks to build the capacity of victims by providing capital, infrastructure, education and skill development to empower them to access justice and to prevent further trafficking.

For the first time, the National Anti-Trafficking Bureau will coordinate with authorities in foreign countries and international organisations, and facilitate inter-State and trans-border transfer of evidence and materials. It will strengthen the intelligence apparatus to improve the collection, collation and dissemination of operational intelligence. The Bureau will also coordinate actions and enforcement by various bodies or authorities established under this Bill. There will be State and District Anti-Trafficking Committees which will arrange for appropriate training and sensitisation of functionaries of all personnel.

It is crucial to note that trafficking is an organised crime. In order to break the organised nexus, at the national and international levels, the Bill proposes attachment and forfeiture of property
and to remit the proceeds of crime in the rehabilitation fund. It will also freeze bank accounts of those whose funds have been utilised to facilitate trafficking. By doing this, the Bill handicaps the organised trafficking networks.

**Systematic surveillance**

The Bureau will also develop and monitor a database on every crime under this Act. Such systematic surveillance of offenders will, in about three years, not only help prevent trafficking but pre-empt it. The Bill does its bit. Now we must all come together to use it to deliver justice.

*Sampurna Behura is Director, Programmes, Bachpan Bachao Andolan*

**Most clauses have little to do with trafficking and more do to with imposing surveillance**

The Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018, fails in its fundamental purpose, i.e. it does not address the issue of trafficking.

Let us first be clear on what we understand by trafficking. ‘Traffic’ means to trade something. It’s a transaction, and refers to the act of buying and selling. ‘Traffic’ or ‘trafficking’ is not wrong per se, but it is pejorative when the transaction involves prohibited goods such as narcotics or firearms or if it involves people. Article 23 of the Constitution prohibits “traffic in human beings and forced labour”. This means that human beings cannot be bought and sold.

**Proscribes legitimate activity**

Barring one provision of the anti-trafficking Bill which criminalises the act of “buying or selling a person for a consideration,” the rest of the clauses do not address this aspect at all. They either criminalise acts that are already punishable under other laws or proscribe activities that are not only legitimate but also constitutionally protected. An example of the former is the ‘new’ offence of “trafficking for the purpose of begging”. Employing or causing someone to beg is already a criminal offence under anti-begging laws. Similarly, unauthorised immigration of citizens and foreigners is dealt with under the Passports Act, 1967, and the Foreigners Act, 1946, respectively. There is nothing novel in the proposed offence of “encouraging or abetting any person to migrate illegally into India or Indians in to some other country”. Besides, illegal migration does not involve elements of ‘trade’ in human beings or trafficking. To term it an “aggravated form of trafficking” is questionable in itself.

The Bill also states that “whoever solicits or publicises electronically, taking or distributing obscene photographs or videos or providing materials or soliciting or guiding tourists or using agents or any other form which may lead to (emphasis mine) the trafficking of a person shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment.” This means that no trafficking needs to take place; a remote possibility is sufficient to prosecute persons and shut down websites. It is important to remember that similar provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000, were struck down by the Supreme Court for being vague and over-broad. Most clauses of the Bill have little to do with trafficking and more do to with imposing surveillance and restricting freedoms through punitive overkill.

**Interplay with existing laws**

The rhetoric around the Bill will also dissipate when we understand its interplay with existing laws, which have not been overruled or repealed. The anti-trafficking Bill relies on Section 370 of the IPC to define and establish that an offence of trafficking of persons has taken place. Section 370 was introduced in 2013 on the recommendation of the Justice Verma Committee. In order to
try offences under the Bill, the prosecution will have to first prove the subsections of Section 370, which are that the victim was transported, recruited, harboured, received or transferred for the purposes of exploiting her/him by using force, abduction, deception, or by abuse of power. Only then will the provisions of the Bill take effect.

For the police and the courts, implementing the numerous anti-trafficking laws will be a nightmare. Only persons accused of trafficking will benefit from the legal mess. It is common knowledge that if more laws are applied, the easier it will be to find loopholes and secure an acquittal. How is this a leap or an advance in anti-trafficking legislation?

**Tripti Tandon is deputy director of Lawyers Collective, an NGO working on human rights issues**

The Bill is well-intentioned and has some positive features, but is a wasted opportunity

The anti-trafficking Bill aims to solve an institutionalised socio-economic problem with a ‘crime and punishment’ model, relying on police stations, courts and jails.

First, the positive features. The fact that the Ministry of Women and Child Development revised the Bill many times before arriving at the final version indicates its genuine intention to bring out a good legislation. The following sections of the Bill are satisfactory: search and seizure; rescue and medical examination of persons; and safety, care and protection of persons rescued. Punishment for omission of duty can be welcomed too, if it does not omit the government officials, including the police, from its ambit.

**Drawbacks of the Bill**

Having said that, the Bill is silent on many types of trafficking, such as trafficking for supply chains, commercial surrogacy, clinical trials, human organ trade, intergenerational trafficking, orphanage tourism and sex tourism. It also doesn’t incorporate the long-pending demands for ‘demand reduction’ and ‘non-institutionalised rehabilitation’.

Instead of strengthening the existing anti-trafficking laws, the Bill calls for another law, one that is uncalled-for and sloppily drafted. The Bill clashes with existing laws, which will lead to confusion.

In an age when an institutional approach for victim care is rapidly discredited and the demand for non-institutional approach is growing, the Bill adds two more unnecessary and vaguely defined institutions: protection homes and rehabilitation homes.

The term ‘victim’ appears several times in the Bill but is shoddily defined. Through Section 59, the Bill overrides a better definition of ‘victim’ given in the Code of Criminal Procedure. Going by the established practice, a victim is one who is ‘rescued’ by the raiding police. So, those rescued by NGOs, parents, friends, and so on are not victims.

**Rescue and rehabilitation**

Going by the public statements of an activist championing the Bill, traffickers get themselves ‘rescued’ by the police so that they can keep an eye on the rescued victims and silence them. In the absence of clarity, such traffickers who operate hand in glove with the police will be the first to get themselves ‘rescued’ and claim hefty compensations, rehabilitation, small capital for business, and worse, an absurd immunity for committing serious offences that are punishable. Such traffickers can simply plead to have committed the crime under threat or “undue personal influence”, as provided in the Bill. In South Asia, often a trafficker is a person known to the
victims. Section 2(x) makes such traffickers eligible for several benefits, independent of arrests, trial or its outcome.

How it is possible to expedite justice when the government is mandated by the Bill to merely issue a circular notifying the existing sessions courts as designated courts is not clear. No new courts or judges are mentioned. The district courts are neither exclusively dedicated to trafficking cases nor will they address such cases on priority. This move will only undo the gains of the past many decades of evolving more sensitive and specialised courts such as Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act courts, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences courts, and family courts.

The drafters of the Bill don’t understand ‘rehabilitation’. Section 30 (5) makes the rehabilitation fund available to the bureaucracy for prevention, protection and prosecution. The Bill is by a well-intentioned Ministry with wrong advisers and is a wasted opportunity.

Pravin Patkar is the founder of Prerana, an anti-trafficking centre based in Mumbai

This refers to the tendency to form friendships and other forms of interpersonal relationships with people we come across often in our daily lives.

Our existing notification subscribers need to choose this option to keep getting the alerts.
The Rajya Sabha on Thursday unanimously cleared the amendments to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, overturning a March 2018 Supreme Court judgment pertaining to safeguard against the arrests under the Act. The Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha earlier this week.

The amendments provide that no preliminary enquiry will be required for registration of an FIR against any person under the Act; and the investigating officer will not require approval for arrests, if necessary. The provision of anticipatory bail as allowed by the Supreme Court has also been done away with.

**Special courts in States**

Replying to the debate on the Bill, Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Thawar Chand Gehlot said: “Prime Minister Narendra Modi has assured his government’s commitment towards backward classes. I today say that we are committed towards safeguarding their interest.” He said 14 States had already constituted 195 special courts for deciding cases under the Act. Some States have declared district and session courts as special courts.

The amendments include a timeline of two months for completing the investigations and filing a chargesheet after registering the FIR. The cases are to be disposed of within two months of filing the chargesheet.

Although the Congress supported the Bill, former Union Minister Kumari Selja questioned the government’s intention, saying it had brought in the amendments due to public agitation and pressure from the Congress-led Opposition. Ms. Selja said the law should have been brought under the 9th schedule of the Constitution (for protection against judicial review), or else the amendments would be challenged in the court again.

Samajwadi Party’s Ram Gopal Yadav sought proper representation of the reserved categories in the judiciary, stating that it had virtually become the “third chamber” of Parliament and was encroaching upon its duty to legislate.

AIADMK’s Vijila Sathyananth demanded a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, pointing out a very low conviction rate under the Act and that also, raised the issue of 9th schedule. Sanjay Raut of the Shiv Sena also supported the Bill, but said there was an apprehension that the law will be misused and innocents will be punished.

Concurring with Mr. Yadav’s views, CPI’s D. Raja also raised the issue of judiciary, the 9th schedule and sought a provision for fast-track courts for speedy justice.

JD(U)’s Ram Chandra Prasad Singh said the cases should be probed by an officer of the DSP rank and above. K. Keshava Rao of the TRS expressed apprehension that the amendments would be challenged in the court again.

*PM has assured his government’s commitment towards backward classes*
Thawar Chand Gehlot

Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment

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END
National Pension System (NPS) has been designed giving utmost importance to the welfare of the subscribers. Government has made a conscious move to shift from the defined benefit Pension Scheme to defined contribution pension scheme i.e. NPS, due to rising and unsustainable pension bill. There are a number of benefits available to the employees under NPS. Some of the benefits are enlisted below:

- NPS is a well designed pension system managed through an unbundled architecture involving intermediaries appointed by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) viz. pension funds, custodian, central record keeping and accounting agency, National Pension System Trust, trustee bank, points of presence and Annuity service providers. It is prudently regulated by PFRDA which is a statutory regulatory body established to promote old age income security and to protect the interest of subscribers of NPS.
- The pension wealth which accumulates over a period of time till retirement grows with a compounding effect. The all-in-costs of the institutional architecture of NPS are among the lowest in the world.
- Contribution made to the NPS Tier-I account is eligible for tax deduction under the Income Tax Act, 1961. An additional tax rebate of Rs.50000 is also allowed for contributions made to NPS Tier-I under Section 80CCD (1B) of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- Subscribers can withdraw up to 25% of their own contributions before attaining age of superannuation, subject to certain conditions. Further, PFRDA vide “PFRDA (Exits and Withdrawals under the NPS) (First Amendment) Regulations, 2017” dated 10.08.2017 has liberalized norms for partial withdrawals which also include reduction of requirement of minimum years of being enrolled under NPS from 10 years to 3 years from the date of joining.
- PFRDA has increased the maximum age limit from 60 years to 65 years for joining NPS-All Citizen Model and Corporate Sector Model, vide “PFRDA (Exits and Withdrawals under the NPS) (Second Amendment) Regulations, 2017” dated 06.10.2017.
- PFRDA vide “PFRDA (Exits and Withdrawals under the NPS) (Third Amendment) Regulations, 2018” dated 02.02.2018 has facilitated easy exit & withdrawal in case of disability and incapacitation of the subscriber covered under NPS.
- Transparency and Portability is ensured through online access of the pension account by the NPS subscribers, across all geographical locations and portability of employments.

Representations have been received which inter alia also include the demand that the Government may revert to old defined benefit pension system. However, due to rising and unsustainable pension bill and competing claims on the fiscal, there is no proposal to replace the NPS with old pension scheme in respect of Central Government employees recruited on or after
01.01.2004.

This was stated by Shri Shiv Pratap Shukla, Minister of State for Finance in a Written reply to a question in Lok Sabha today.

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DSM/KA

(Release ID: 1542753) Visitor Counter : 730

END
Total number of subscribers under APY is 1,09,66,981 as on 06.08.2018 out of which 43,87,993 subscribers are women

The Atal Pension Yojana (APY) was launched in May, 2015 and is operational from 1st June, 2015. The APY is primarily focussed on all citizens in the unorganised sector, who are not covered by any pension scheme. All citizens of the country in the eligible category may join the scheme. As on 06.08.2018, the total number of subscribers under APY is 1,09,66,981, out of which, 43,87,993 subscribers are women. The salient features of the Atal Pension Yojana are as under:

- Indian Citizens between the age group of 18 to 40 years eligible to join APY through their savings bank account or post office savings bank account.
- APY is based on defined benefit for providing guaranteed minimum monthly pension of Rs. 1000 or Rs. 2000 or Rs. 3000 or Rs. 4000 or Rs. 5000 at the age of 60 years based on pension amount chosen.
- The Central Government would also co-contribute 50% of the total contribution or Rs. 1000 per annum, whichever is lower, to each eligible subscriber, for a period of 5 years, i.e., from Financial Year 2015-16 to 2019-20, who have joined the APY before 31st March, 2016, and who are not members of any statutory social security scheme and who are not income tax payers.
- In case of premature death of Subscriber (death before 60 years of age), spouse of the subscriber has been given an option to continue contributing to APY account of the subscriber, for the remaining vesting period, till the original subscriber would have attained the age 60 years.
- In case of death of both subscriber and spouse, the entire pension corpus would be returned to the nominee. If the accumulated corpus based on contributions earns a lower than estimated return on investment and is inadequate to provide the minimum guaranteed pension, the Central Government would fund such inadequacy. Alternatively, if the actual returns during the accumulation phase are higher than the assumed returns for minimum guaranteed pension, such excess will be passed on to the subscriber.

With a view to provide flexibility to the subscribers of APY with seasonal or irregular income, besides the monthly mode of payment, quarterly and half yearly mode of payment of contributions have been provided in the Scheme. Further in case of default in payment of contribution, a subscriber may regularize the account by paying the overdue amount along with a minimal charge to obtain the guaranteed pension.
The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) has informed that the report of PFRDA and CRISIL on ‘Financial security for India’s elderly’ has, inter-alia, mentioned designing of a pension policy exclusively for women where contributions could be from the women’s families. Some tax relief to the savings held in the form of pension has also been mentioned.

This was stated by Shri Shiv Pratap Shukla, Minister of State for Finance in a Written Reply to a question in Lok Sabha today.

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DSM/KA

(Release ID: 1542745) Visitor Counter : 130

END
MISSION INDRADHANUSH


Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

**Mission Indradhanush**

Posted On: 10 AUG 2018 6:40PM by PIB Delhi

Mission Indradhanush aims to increase full immunization coverage in India to atleast 90% children by December 2018. The salient feature of Mission Indradhanush is to cover unvaccinated and partially vaccinated children in areas with low immunization coverage, in both urban and rural areas. The State/UT - wise details of children and women vaccinated including Uttar Pradesh under Mission Indradhanush is given at Annexure-1.

No separate funds are allocated for Mission Indradhanush. Funds allocated for Routine Immunization under part ‘C’ of Programme Implementation Plan (PIP) are being utilized by the states to carryout activities under Mission Indradhanush.

No Mission Indradhanush does not targets to reduce post natal death rate but targets to reduce diseases and death due to vaccine preventable diseases.

The State/UT - wise number of children and women vaccinated during the year 2017-18 is given at Annexure-2.

Routine Immunization which is implemented across country has been further strengthened through Mission Indradhanush. Mission Indradhanush has been implemented in low coverage pockets and has been expanded during (i) Intensified Mission Indradhanush (ii) Gram Swaraj Abhiyan and (iii) Expanded Gram Swaraj Abhiyaan.

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Annexure - 1

**State UT wise Children and Women Vaccinated under Mission Indradhanush**

(in Lakhs)

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<th>S.No</th>
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<th>No. of Pregnant Women Immunized</th>
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**INDIA**  
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The Minister of State (Health and Family Welfare), Smt Anupriya Patel stated this in a written reply in the Lok Sabha here today.

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MV/SK

(Release ID: 1542735) Visitor Counter : 244

END

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MOHFW AND MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS SIGN AN MOU FOR EXTENDING SERVICES OF SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAMME TO SCHOOLS SUPPORTED BY MOTA


MoHFW and Ministry of Tribal Affairs sign an MoU for extending services of School Health Programme to schools supported by MoTA

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA), Government of India for cooperation between the two Ministries for sensitizing the principals and training to teachers each of all functional EMRSs, Ashram Schools and other Schools supported by MoTA in the country using the existing infrastructure of MoTA in the states. The MoU covers various activities including extending all aspects of the School Health Program viz., providing weekly Iron and Folic Acid Supplementation, biannual de-worming, basic first aid and health promotion activities through teachers designated as Health and Wellness Ambassadors at the school level in all functional EMRSs, Ashram Schools and other Schools supported by MoTA in the states. Ensuring quality training of Master Trainer and District Level Trainers and periodically reviewing the status of implementation as per the guidelines of School Health Programme. Issuing the required directives to the States where EMRSs, Ashram Schools and other Schools supported by MoTA are functional to extend all assistance to MoHFW for sensitization of principals and training of Teachers, allocating and disbursing the required funds to the States for sensitization of principals and training of Teachers and organizing School Health Programme activities within its existing schemes and issuing necessary instructions to the States with EMRSs, Ashram Schools and other schools supporting by MoTA for reporting of activities as per the formats given in the School Health Programme with the indicated periodicity to MoHFW are some of the other activities covered under the MoU.

An Expert Committee on Tribal Health was constituted jointly by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW) and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA), Government of India in the year 2013 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Abhay Bang to primarily look into the present status of health and health care in tribal areas and ascertain the reasons for the gaps in both health status and health care in tribal areas, and also to draw out a road map for the future to bridge the gap rapidly. The Expert Committee
has presented its report to the Government of India. The report has been prepared on the basis of extensive studies made after extensive data collected on various aspects of tribal health over the four-year period. By way of affirmative action, the M/o Health and Family Welfare, in collaboration with Ministry of Tribal Affairs propose to extend health screening services through its School Health Programme component under Ayushman Bharat through Rashtriya Bal Swasthaya Karyakram (RBSK) for betterment of health of the Scheduled Tribes including the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

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NB/RN

(Release ID: 1542683) Visitor Counter : 197
SINGLE LARGE FACILITY IN EACH STATE FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN WILL HELP TO ENSURE PROPER CARE AND PROTECTION: SMT MANEKA SANJAY GANDHI

Single large facility in each State for women and children will help to ensure proper care and protection: Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi

Posted On: 10 AUG 2018 5:21PM by PIB Delhi

The Minister of Women & Child Development, Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi today chaired a meeting of the Consultative Committee of Parliament attached to WCD Ministry and briefed the members about the status of Child Care Institutions (CCIs) and Shelter Homes in the country. The WCD Minister said that the Ministry of WCD has been relentlessly pursuing with the States/UT governments to ensure that CCIs adhere to standards of care as per the JJ Act, 2015.

In 2016, the Ministry undertook a study on CCIs in partnership with Childline India foundation and NCPCR. As a result of the study, they were able to map more than 9000 CCIs/Homes out of which only 32% (3071) were registered under JJ Act. Briefing the members further, the Minister said that the WCD Ministry took up a drive for registration of these CCIs/Homes. As an outcome, 7109 of these CCIs were reported to have been registered by 31st December, 2017 while 401 reportedly under process. Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi further said that in the light of the recent episodes pertaining to the CCIs, the WCD Ministry in collaboration with NCPCR has now taken up a social audit of CCIs. Social audit of 3000 homes has already been completed and more than 40 Homes have been closed down for not adhering to norms.

Smt Maneka Gandhi further said that for long run solution to the problem of providing adequate care and protection to the children, it is important to have a large central facility for women and children in every State. The land is provided by the State Governments, the WCD Ministry will provide funds from Nirbhaya fund and other sources. The government will be able to run well designed programmes of skilling, trade, education etc in these homes alongwith providing protection with the help of close supervision since it will be run by the government itself.

She also urged the members to inspect the CCIs in their constituencies and interact closely with the district magistrates to ensure proper supervision and monitoring of the CCIs. The suggestion of setting up a single large facility in each State where children and women can be sheltered was greatly welcomed by all the members.

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NB/UD
More than 7 lakh out of school adolescent girls (11-14 years) benefitted under the scheme for Adolescent Girls in 2017-18

Posted On: 10 AUG 2018 4:13PM by PIB Delhi

The Government is implementing Scheme for Adolescent Girls, a Centrally-sponsored scheme, to provide nutrition support for out of school adolescent girls (11-14 years). In addition, the scheme aims at motivating out of school girls in the age group of 11-14 years to go back to formal schooling or skill training under non-nutrition component of the scheme. The Scheme aims at all-round development of out-of-school Adolescent Girls of age 11-14 years and is implemented through the State Governments/UTs using ICDS infrastructure.

The scheme has two components Nutrition and Non Nutrition. Under the Nutrition component, each out of school Adolescent Girl of age 11-14 years is provided 600 calories, 18-20 grams of protein and micronutrients @ Rs. 9.5 per beneficiary per day for 300 days in a year. The non-nutrition component has an built-in factor to motivate out of school girls to go back to formal schooling or skill training. In addition, the scheme also aims at promoting awareness about health, hygiene, nutrition and facilitating access to learning about public services through various interventions such as guidance and counselling as well as skill training. The guidelines of the Scheme are available on the website of MWCD.

A sum of Rs. 460 crore was allocated for the scheme for 2017-18 against which a sum of Rs. 450.66 were released to States/UTs benefitting 7.26 lakh out of school adolescent girls of age 11-14 years as reported by the States/UTs. In 2018-19, against the allocation of Rs. 500 crore, as of now a sum of Rs. 81.59 crore has been released to States/UTs.

The above Information was given by Minister of Women and Child Development, Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi in reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, today.

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NB/UD

(Release ID: 1542604) Visitor Counter : 219
ALL DISTRICTS WILL BE COVERED UNDER THE POSHAN ABHIYAN (NATIONAL NUTRITION MISSION) BY 2019-20: SMT MANEKA SANJAY GANDHI


Ministry of Women and Child Development

All districts will be covered under the POSHAN Abhiyan (National Nutrition Mission) by 2019-20: Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi

Posted On: 10 AUG 2018 4:07PM by PIB Delhi

POSHAN Abhiyan (National Nutrition Mission - NNM) set up by Government on November, 2017 aims to reduce the level of stunting, under-nutrition, anemia and low birth weight babies. The important components of the Abhiyan are: ensuring convergence with various programmes; incentivizing States/ UTs for achieving goals; IT enabled Real Time Monitoring (ICT-RTM); Evaluation; weighing efficiency and making nutrition visible; Community mobilization awareness advocacy; IEC, Jan Andolan - to educate the people on nutritional aspects, on-line Course on Nutrition for Children, Nutrition message from folk songs and songs on WASH, sending messages on nutrition and also creating ring-tones, Yoga for children at AWCs; strengthening human resource; measuring height and length of children below 6 years of age. Coverage of districts in a phased manner is 315 districts in 2017-18, 235 districts in 2018-19 and remaining districts in 2019-20.

The total budget for the POSHAN Abhiyan is Rs.9046.17 crore with GoI share of Rs.2849.54 crore.

Under POSHAN Abhiyan, the Government has fixed targets to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively. Mission also strives to achieve reduction in Stunting from 38.4% (NFHS-4) to 25% by 2022 (Mission 25 by 2022).

A single unified technical set-up, namely a National Nutrition Resource Centre – Central Project Management Unit (NNRC-CPMU) at the national level and similarly State Nutrition Resource Centre – State Project Management Unit (SNRC-SPMU) in all States/ UTs ensures regular monitoring and review of all sectoral programmes especially those directly affecting malnutrition and.

A day long National Seminar TECH-THON- Technology Partnerships for POSHAN Abhiyaan was organised on 28th June 2018. It was aimed at showcasing & orienting the environment towards the initiative, exchange ideas, ideate and exploring avenues of cooperation and partnerships for technology support as well as, reaching-out to the beneficiaries for effective behavioural change to initiate a ‘Peoples Movement’ or Jan Andolan towards Nutrition.

Monitoring is done under POSHAN Abhiyaan through ICDS-CAS aimed to augment system strengthening including improving the coverage and quality of nutrition services. The
ICDS-CAS has two components, namely the mobile application which is made available to the field functionaries pre-loaded on mobile phones and a six tier monitoring dashboard for desktops. The software allows the capture of data from the field on electronic devices (mobile/tablet). It enables collection of information on ICDS service delivery and its impact on nutrition outcomes in beneficiaries on a regular basis. The ICDS-CAS dashboard facilitates Nutrition outcome oriented monitoring triggered by mapping of weighment efficiency, height and nutrition status of children under-five years. The service delivery to children, pregnant women and lactating mothers can be monitored through the software application dashboard.

Capacity enhancement of frontline functionaries is being done through Incremental Learning Approach (ILA). Joint planning, implementation, and review of performance with health functionaries and continued knowledge and learning exchange through workshops and exposure visits to best practices are a part of this approach. A total of 21 ILA modules have been developed and disseminated to all States/ UTs and are also available on Ministry’s website wcd.nic.in.

The above Information was given by Minister of Women and Child Development, Stm Maneka Sanjay Gandhi in reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, today.

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NB/UD
As per 2011 census, there are 43.53 lakh main workers in the age group of 5-14 years in various occupation and process including domestic work in the country.

As per Ministry of Labour & Employment, Government is following a multi-pronged strategy for elimination of child labour. It comprises of statutory and legislative measures, rehabilitation and universal elementary education along with convergence with other schemes for socio economic development. Government has enacted the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016 which came into force w.e.f. 1.9.2016. The Amendment Act inter alia provides for complete prohibition of work or employment of children below 14 years in any occupation and process and adolescents in the age group of 14 to 18 years in hazardous occupations and processes. The amendment also provides stricter punishment for employers for violation of the Act and made the offence as cognizable.

After strengthening the legislative framework through amendment in Child Labour Act, Government has framed the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2017 which inter alia specifies the duties and responsibilities of State Governments and District Authorities to ensure effective enforcement of the provisions of the Act. Government has also devised a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) as a ready reckoner for trainers, practitioners and enforcing and monitoring agencies. Government is also implementing the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme for rehabilitation of child labour. Under the Scheme children in the age group of 9-14 years, rescued/withdrawn from work are enrolled in the NCLP Special Training Centres, where they are provided with bridge education, vocational training, mid day meal, stipend, health care, etc. before being mainstreamed into formal education system. Further to ensure effective enforcement of the provisions of the Child Labour Act and smooth implementation of the NCLP Scheme a separate online portal PENCIL (Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labour) has been developed.

In addition to above Ministry of Women and Child Development has enacted Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act). As per Section 2 (14) (ii) and (ix) of JJ Act, a child who is found working in contravention of labour laws for the time being in force or is found begging, or living on the street and who is found vulnerable and is likely to be inducted into drug abuse or trafficking is included as a “child in need of care and protection”, among others. The children in need of care and protection (CNCP) for rehabilitation has been placed in institutional care i.e. Children Homes or non-institutional care, such as sponsorship, foster care by Child Welfare Committee. As per JJ Act, 2015, State/UTs are required to set-up Child Care
Institutions (CCIs) and are also required to register and monitor them under Section 41 and 54 of the Act respectively. The primary responsibility of execution of the Act, lies with the State/UTs. However, Central Government is managing “Child Protection Services” (CPS) (erstwhile Integrated Child Protection Scheme) under umbrella Integrated Child Development Services, and providing financial assistance, as Grant-in-Aid, to the States/UTs on sharing pattern for, inter-alia, undertaking a situational analysis of children in difficult circumstances, for setting up and maintenance of various types of CCIs. Further National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), a statutory organization under this ministry, has developed a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for care and protection of Children in Street Situations to streamline the processes and interventions regarding children in street situations. Under the scheme “CPS”, institutional care is provided through CCIs, as a rehabilitative measure. In these CCIs, children are provided age appropriate education either within the institution or outside in a formal education system through convergence with other schemes and programs of the Government or civil society. Under the non-institutional care component, support is extended for adoption, foster care and sponsorship.

The above Information was given by Minister of Women and Child Development, Stm Maneka Sanjay Gandhi in reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, today.

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(NB/UD)

(Release ID: 1542596) Visitor Counter : 378

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The Consumer Protection Bill, 2018 was introduced in Lok Sabha in January 2018. The Bill replaces the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. Previously in 2015, a Bill had been introduced to replace the 1986 Act. The 2015 Bill acknowledged that the rapid change in consumer markets, introduction of practices such as misleading advertisements, and new modes of transactions (online, teleshopping, etc.) had necessitated the need for a new law. The Bill was subsequently referred to a Standing Committee, which recommended several changes to it. The Bill was withdrawn and replaced with the Consumer Protection Bill, 2018. The Bill is listed for passage in the ongoing Monsoon Session. In this post, we analyse the Bill in its current form.

How is the 2018 Bill different from the 1986 Act?

The Bill adds various provisions for consumer protection that were absent in the 1986 Act. Key among them are the provisions on product liability and unfair contracts. Under product liability, when a consumer suffers an injury, property damage or death due to a defect in a product or service, he can file a claim for compensation under product liability. The Bill outlines cases in which the product manufacturer, service provider and seller will be held guilty under product liability. Under the proposed law, to claim product liability, an aggrieved consumer has to prove any one of the conditions mentioned in the Bill with regard to a manufacturer, service provider and seller, as the case may be.

An unfair contract has been defined as a contract between a consumer and manufacturer/service provider if it causes significant change in consumer rights. Unfair contracts cover six terms, such as payment of excessive security deposits in an arrangement, disproportionate penalty for a breach, and unilateral termination without cause. The consumer courts being set up under the Bill will determine contract terms to be unfair and declare them null and void.

What are the different bodies being set up under the Bill?

The Bill sets up Consumer Protection Councils as advisory bodies, who will advise on protection and promotion of consumer rights. However, it does not make it clear who these Councils will render advise to. Under the 1986 Act, the Consumer Protection Councils have the responsibility to protect and promote consumer rights.

To promote, protect, and enforce consumer rights, the Bill is setting up a regulatory body, known as the Central Consumer Protection Authority. This Authority can also pass orders to prevent unfair and restrictive trade practices, such as selling goods not complying with standards, and impose penalties for false and misleading advertisements.

The Bill also sets up the Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions (known as consumer courts) at the district, state and national levels. These Commissions will adjudicate a broad range of complaints, including complaints on defective goods and deficient services of varying values. These Commissions are also present under the 1986 Act. However, their pecuniary jurisdiction (amount up to which they can hear complaints) has been revised under the Bill. The Bill also adds a provision for alternate dispute redressal mechanism. As part of this, mediation
cells will be attached with the Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions.

**What are the penal provisions under the Bill?**

The Bill increases penalties for different offences specified in it. It also adds penalties for offences such as issuing misleading advertisements, and manufacturing and selling adulterated or spurious goods. For example, in case of false and misleading advertisements, the Central Consumer Protection Authority can impose a penalty of up to Rs 10 lakh on a manufacturer or an endorser. For a subsequent offence, the fine may extend to Rs 50 lakh. The manufacturer can also be punished with imprisonment of up to two years, which may extend to five years for every subsequent offence. The Authority can also prohibit the endorser of a misleading advertisement from endorsing any particular product or service for a period of up to one year. For every subsequent offence, the period of prohibition may extend to three years. There are certain exceptions when an endorser will not be held liable for such a penalty.

**Are there any issues to think about in the Bill?**

The 2018 Bill is a marked improvement over the 2015 Bill and addresses several issues in the 2015 Bill. However, two major issues with regard to the Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions remain. We discuss them below.

First issue is with regard to the composition of these Commissions. The Bill specifies that the Commissions will be headed by a ‘President’ and will comprise other members. However, the Bill delegates the power of deciding the qualifications of the President and members to the central government. It also does not specify that the President or members should have minimum judicial qualifications. This is in contrast with the existing Consumer Protection Act, 1986, which states that the Commissions at various levels will be headed by a person qualified to be a judge. The 1986 Act also specifies the minimum qualification of members.

Under the current Bill, if the Commissions were to have only non-judicial members, it may violate the principle of separation of powers between the executive and the judiciary. Since these Commissions are adjudicating bodies and will look at consumer dispute cases, it is unclear how a Commission that may comprise only non-judicial members will undertake this function.

Second issue is with regard to the method of appointment of members of the Commissions. The Bill permits the central government to notify the method of appointment of members of the Commissions. It does not require that the selection involve members from the higher judiciary. It may be argued that allowing the executive to determine the appointment of the members of Commissions could affect the independent functioning of the Commissions. This provision is also at variance with the 1986 Act. Under the Act, appointment of members to these Commissions is done through a selection committee. These section committees comprise a judicial member.

As mentioned previously, the Commissions are intended to be quasi-judicial bodies, while the government is part of the executive. There may be instances where the government is a party to a dispute relating to deficiency in service provided by a government enterprise, for e.g., the Railways. In such a case, there would be a conflict of interest as the government would be a party to the dispute before the Commissions and will also have the power to appoint members to the Commission.
MORE THAN ONE LAKHS CASES REGISTERED UNDER SEXUAL ABUSE, POCSO ACT 2012 FROM 2014-2016

Ministry of Women and Child Development

More than one lakhs cases registered under Sexual Abuse, POCSO Act 2012 from 2014-2016

Posted On: 09 AUG 2018 7:18PM by PIB Delhi

As per National Crime Records Bureau, a total of 34,449, 34,505 and 36,022 cases registered under Sexual Abuse/Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 in 2014, 2015 and 2016 respectively for crime against children accounting 0.2% in 2015 over 2014 and 4.4% in 2016 over 2015.

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) (JJ) Act 2015 is the primary law to protect the interest of children in need of care and protection and in conflict with law. Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) now “Child Protection Services” under Integrated Child Development Services, is implemented with aim to create a safety net of dedicated structures, services and personnel for protection of children in need of care and protection as well as reduction of vulnerabilities to situations and actions that lead to abuse, exploitation and separation of children from their families. Under the scheme “Child Protection Services” financial assistance is provided to the States/UTs on sharing pattern for, inter-alia, undertaking a situational analysis of children in difficult circumstances, for setting up and maintenance of various types of Child Care Institutions (CCIs). Under the scheme institutional care is provided through CCIs, as a rehabilitative measure. In these CCIs, children are provided age appropriate education either within the institution or outside in a formal education system through convergence with other schemes and programs of the Government or civil society. Under the non-institutional care component, support is extended for adoption, foster care and sponsorship. The details of fund released and utilized thereunder during the last three years are given below:

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The above Information was given by Minister of State for Women and Child Development, Dr. Virendra Kumar in reply to an Unstarred Question in the Rajya Sabha, today.

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NB/PS/UD

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END

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NEARLY 32 LAKH WOMEN HAVE RECEIVED BENEFITS UNDER MATERNITY BENEFIT SCHEME SINCE ITS INCEPTION


Ministry of Women and Child Development

Nearly 32 lakh women have received benefits under Maternity Benefit Scheme since its inception

Posted On: 09 AUG 2018 7:17PM by PIB Delhi

Section 4 (b) of the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA) provides that subject to such schemes as may be framed by the Central Government, every pregnant woman and lactating mother, except those in regular employment with the Central Government or State Governments or Public Sector Undertakings or those who are in receipt of similar benefits under any law for the time being in force, are entitled to maternity benefit of not less than 6,000/-, in such instalments as may be prescribed by the Central Government.

The Government has approved Pan-India implementation of Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), a new Centrally Sponsored Conditional Cash Transfer Scheme, on 17.05.2017 for implementation across the country with effect from 01.01.2017. Under the scheme, 5,000/- is provided to the eligible beneficiary in three installments. The eligible beneficiary also receives the remaining cash incentive as per approved norms towards maternity benefit under Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) after institutional delivery so that on an average, a woman gets 6,000/-.  

21,20,204 beneficiaries were enrolled on Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana – Common Application Software (PMMVY-CAS) for receiving maternity benefits under the scheme during the financial year 2017-18.

A total of 31,73,905 beneficiaries have received maternity benefits since inception of the scheme.

The above Information was given by Minister of Women and Child Development,
Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi in reply to an Unstarred Question in the Rajya Sabha, today.

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NB/PS/UD
DEATH PENALTY FOR RAPE OF GIRLS BELOW 12 YEARS


Ministry of Women and Child Development

Death Penalty for Rape of Girls Below 12 Years

Posted On: 09 AUG 2018 7:16PM by PIB Delhi

As reported by Ministry of Home Affairs, the Government has not received any representation from Child Right Activists opposing the death penalty for rape of girls below 12 years of age. However, the Criminal Law(Amendment) Bill, 2018 has been passed by the Lok Sabha on 30.07.2018 and by the Rajya Sabha on 06.08.2018.

The above Information was given by Minister of State for Women and Child Development, Dr. Virendra Kumar in reply to an Unstarred Question in the Rajya Sabha, today.

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NB/PS/UD

(Release ID: 1542400) Visitor Counter : 242

END
The committee would look into what reforms could be introduced.

A committee headed by a retired judge of the Supreme Court will be formed to tackle the issue of children living in prisons merely because their mothers are convicts.

A Bench of Justices Madan B. Lokur and Deepak Gupta has directed the government to form a panel headed by a former apex court judge, assisted by two or three Central government officers, to study the problems of mothers and children living inside prisons. Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal, for the Centre, agreed with the court’s view.

The order came after Supreme Court’s amicus curiae and advocate Gaurav Agarwal submitted a report showing that there were 18 jails exclusively for women. Plus there are separate areas for women in other jails, but there is a huge lack of space for women inmates. He said these jails were not modelled to house women inmates, especially those with minor children staying with them.

The committee would also look into what reforms could be introduced within the prison walls.

The court said the Centre should issue a notification on the setting up of the committee, highlighting the importance of prison reforms and the fundamental right to life and dignity of the prisoners.

The court ordered training manuals to be circulated to the Directors-General of Prisons and Secretaries of Prison Department in each State government/ Union Territory and also to three training institutes, that is, Institute of Corrections Administration, Chandigarh; Regional Institute of Correctional Administration, Kolkata; and Academy of Prison and Correctional Administration, Vellore.

The court advised the Centre that criminals sentenced to imprisonment for six months or a year should be allocated social service duties rather than be sent to further choke the already overflowing prisons.

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“Non-disclosure to draw penal provisions”

In order to ensure safe workplaces for Women in the private sector, the Ministry of Women and Child had requested Hon’ble Minister for Corporate Affairs to mandate the disclosure regarding implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act in the Directors Report of every company. Vide its notification dated 31.07.2018, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs has amended the Companies (Accounts) Rules, 2014, issued under Section-134 of the Companies Act, by inserting clause(X) as follows:-

I. “A statement that the Company has complied with provisions relating to the constitution of Internal Complaints Committee under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013”.

While thanking Hon’ble Minister for Corporate Affairs, Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi stated that, “this is a major step towards making the workplace safe for the women in the private sector”. Smt. Gandhi also stated that she will be requesting SEBI to suitably incorporate this disclosure in the Corporate Governance reports of the listed Companies. This will cast as ever higher responsibility on the Directors of these Companies for implementation of the Act.
It may be noted that Section-134 of the Companies Act, 2013 provides the disclosure framework which the Directors of every company are required to comply with in the Annual Reports. This section also includes the penal provisions for non-disclosure. The inclusion of the compliance under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act in the non-financial disclosures will ensure that the issue gets into the focus into Board of Directors of the companies.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has been making continuous efforts to mainstream the implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013. Detailed Rules under the Act were issued. It was ensured that all the ministries/ departments under the central government as well as the organizations working directly under them constitute the Internal Complaints Committee as mandated under them Act. A number of instructions have been issued by the DoPT on the request of the ministry to provide immediate relief to the women working in central government against sexual harassment at workplace. The ministry has also empanelled a number of entities who can provide training to any organization on effective implementation of the provisions of the Act. The ministry has provided a facility to all working women to file complaints under this Act directly with the ministry through the SHE-Box.

Please, click here, for the complete notification by the Ministry of Corporate affairs.

NB/PS.

(Release ID: 1542886) Visitor Counter : 382

Read this release in: Tamil
Maneka Gandhi called it a step towards making the workplace safe for women.

In order to ensure better implementation of the law against sexual harassment at workplace, the Centre has made it mandatory for companies to disclose whether they have constituted an internal complaints committee (ICC) to probe such allegations.

**Rules amended**

The Corporate Affairs Ministry has amended the Companies (Accounts) Rules, 2014, governed by the Companies Act, 2013, mandating the disclosure. This has been a long-standing demand from Minister for Women and Child Development Maneka Gandhi.

The amended rules were notified on July 31. It adds a clause to a rule on matters that should be part of the Board’s report.

The new clause says that the report will have to contain “a statement that the Company has complied with provisions relating to the constitution of Internal Complaints Committee under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.”

Ms. Gandhi called the move a “major step towards making the workplace safe for the women in the private sector." She added that she will be requesting regulator Security Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to incorporate this disclosure in the report on corporate governance of various companies so that there is a higher responsibility on the Directors of these Companies to implement the Act.

Under the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, it is mandatory for any organisation with 10 or more employees to constitute an ICC. An employer who doesn’t do so could face a fine of up to Rs. 50,000.

An ICC should consist of a presiding officer, who is a woman employee at a senior level in the same organisation, at least two employees “preferably committed to the cause of women”, and a member from an NGO or a person “familiar with issues relating to sexual harassment.”

**Like civil court**

The committee would have powers similar to those of a civil court and would have to complete its inquiry within 90 days.

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Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal argued that SC/ST are a “homogeneous group and any action to regroup them based on economic or social advancement would not be apt”.

Mr. Venugopal said rigorous modalities were prescribed for inclusion of communities in the list of SCs/STs. “For inclusion of communities in the list of the SCs, one of the important determinants is the traditional practice of untouchability,” he submitted.

The government wants a larger Bench of the Supreme Court to set aside its 2006 judgment in the Nagaraj case. This verdict mandates that the government cannot introduce quota in promotion for SC/ST persons in public employment unless they prove that the particular Dalit community is backward, is inadequately represented and such a reservation in promotion would not affect the overall efficiency of public administration.

The opinion of the government should be based on quantifiable data, too, it said.

The government has argued that the judgment was a roadblock to its authority to introduce quota in promotions in favour of SC/ST communities as per Article 16 (4A) of the Constitution.

“It is not disputed that the members of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are specified in the notifications issued under Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution and, therefore, they must be deemed to be scheduled castes and scheduled tribes,” he submitted.

He said there is an “intense investigation before the notification under Articles 341 and 342 is issued. The inquiry identifies the people who have suffered for centuries and hence, by applying the ‘creamy layer’ concept, they should not be deprived of the benefits which accrue to them.”

‘Imposition on state’ Mr. Venugopal submitted that the Nagaraj verdict destroyed the very essence of Article 16 (4A) by imposing on the State the need to bring to the table ‘quantifiable data’ to justify its decision to promote SC/ST officers in public employment. “SC/ST communities are per se deprived,” the AG said.

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The urgency to address poor nutrition in India, especially among children, adolescent girls and women is compelling, and re-confirmed in virtually every survey — from NFHS-4 in 2015-16 (the latest available information), to the Global Nutrition Report 2016 and the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2017, which ranks India at 100 out of 119 countries, with a low overall score of 31.4. Among children less than 5 years, wasting (low weight for height), continues to be 21% in the 2017 index — it was 20% in 1992. There has been a reduction in stunting (height for age) – from 61.9% in 1992 to 38.4% in 2017, reported in the GHI 2017. Mortality among children less than 5 years old has declined to around 5% from 11% during the same period, according to both the GHI and the NFHS. However, 25% of India’s children less than 5 years old are still malnourished.

Add to this the fact that 190.7 million people in India sleep hungry every night, and over half of adolescent girls and women are anaemic, and the conclusion is obvious — despite a 7% compound annual growth rate over the last decade and the various programmes to improve nutrition, levels of under-nutrition are unacceptably high.

This grim reality has rightly lead to a renewed emphasis to address the various forms of poor nutrition – stunted, wasted, anaemic and underweight children; anaemic girls and women, especially in the 15-49 age group. The recently announced flagship program of the Ministry of Women and Child Development will be anchored through the National Nutrition Mission (NNM), or Poshan Abhiyaan, with its own specific budget of 9,046 crore and a proposed World Bank loan of $200 million, to ensure convergence among the various programmes of the government. Additionally, NITI Aayog has worked on a National Nutrition Strategy (NNS), isolated the 100 most backward districts for stunting and prioritised those for interventions.

A cynical view would be that we have seen such declarations before – after all, the special attention to nutrition was highlighted in 2008 when the Prime Minister’s National Council on India’s Nutrition Challenges was constituted. A detailed report, “Addressing India’s Nutrition Challenges”, was submitted in 2010 by the Planning Commission, the convergence of an extensive and multi-sector consultation. But nothing changed significantly.

The optimistic view says that exploring new models to address the structural and systemic issues on a priority basis, learning from what has worked or not, and single-minded focus on implementation will be critical to delivering better nutritional outcomes and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals, to which India is a signatory. Additionally, initiatives like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, where implemented, will contribute positively to nutrition outcomes, and well-structured public-private partnerships could be the catalyst.

Seen in this context, the overhaul of capacity and capability in three existing programmes, designed to reach populations most at risk, should be the first priority — namely, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), with its network of 1.4 million Anganwadi Centres, reaching almost 100 million beneficiaries who include pregnant and nursing mothers and children up to 6 years; mid-day meals (MDM) that reach almost 120 million children in schools; and the Public Distribution System (PDS) that reaches over 800 million people under the National Food Security Act.
The National Nutrition Strategy (NNS) has set very ambitious targets for 2022 and the Poshan Abhiyaan has also specified three-year targets to reduce stunting, under-nutrition and low birth weight by 2% each year, and to reduce anaemia by 3% each year. For purposeful action, it is imperative to have common goals and metrics for improving nutrition, which can then be disaggregated by year, State, district, etc., into a nutrition dashboard, with metrics that are clear and measurable and a real-time tracking mechanism, much like we track economic data. It is interesting to note that the National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB), established in 1972, was dissolved in 2015.

Both the NNS and the NNM have recognised the criticality of working collaboratively across Ministries; yet both are silent on the constructive role that the private sector, development agencies and civil society can and must play in realising these ambitious goals. Altering the fundamentals of poor nutrition requires multiple and sustained interventions over a period of time — increased availability and accessibility of nutritious food, potable water, hygiene and sanitation, primary health care, etc. The approach, commitment and resources therefore have to be inter-generational, multi-sector, multi-dimensional and multi-year. To simplify a complex issue, the challenge for India is to simultaneously address insufficient and poor diets, inadequate hygiene and sanitation and better management of disease and infections.

Success in this domain will be driven by coordinated action on multiple fronts, but there are at least three urgent priorities.

One, to adequately re-engineer the ICDS, MDM and PDS for greater effectiveness. This is an ideal initiative for public-private partnerships as the strength of good private sector companies is in creating and designing frameworks, structures, processes and metrics for action, implementation and tracking. For example, involving the best nutritionists to work with local communities on calorie and nutrition dense supplementary foods, using easily available local ingredients that are within the ICDS and MDM budget guidelines, and produced by self-help groups, could easily be anchored by the relevant private sector and development agencies, working with State governments, and considered a corporate social responsibility initiative. The key advantages of this disaggregated supply model are that it engages local communities, generates employment and ensures minimal leakage as it works with and inside the community. This will also ensure that space and other constraints of lack of hygiene at Anganwadi Centres do not become impediments in the supply of nutritious food.

Two, to mandate and scale staple food fortification comprising edible oil, wheat, rice and dairy products, in addition to salt. There is persuasive evidence from several countries of the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of large-scale staple food fortification to address “hidden hunger” or micro-nutrient deficiencies. The effectiveness of iodised salt in significantly reducing iodine deficiency is well-established in India empirically. The success of micro-nutrient fortified food is that it does not entail a change in behaviour. Considerable work will also have to be done to make fortified rice and wheat available through the PDS. This requires addressing the supply chain capability to deliver — another excellent PPP initiative, that has been piloted in several States for edible oil and wheat flour and can easily be replicated. A case in point is the mandate of July and August 2017 to use fortified oil, salt and wheat flour in the ICDS and MDM by the Ministries of Women and Child Development and Human Resource Development, respectively. In the absence of coordination with industry to create an effective supply chain, this proposed intervention will be another missed opportunity.

Mandatory fortification with micro-nutrients often sparks an emotional debate, and the way to think about it is that these universally consumed staple foods become the carriers of vitamins and minerals that people need but do not get in sufficient quantity from the food they consume.
Three, multiple campaigns designed to inform, communicate and educate on nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive behaviours like breast feeding, diet diversity, hand-washing, de-worming, safe drinking water, hygiene and sanitation. Nutrition has to be “marketed” and made interesting, engaging, simple and personally relevant — this is an expertise where the private sector can meaningfully contribute.

Nutrition is complex, and therefore its delivery must be simplified through greater awareness and actions. The delivery models must be collaborative across domains, with clear decision rights and hard-wired processes, enabled by technology and a significant investment in strengthening people competencies. Unless economic growth improves social and human development, it cannot be sustained. Equally, economic growth itself is impeded by low levels of productivity in an under-nourished and malnourished population.

Vinita Bali is a strategy adviser and independent director, and chairs the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition

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INSURANCE FOR MENTAL HEALTH PATIENTS: WELL BEGUN BUT FAR FROM DONE

In a first for India, medical insurance for the treatment of mental illnesses will be available as in cases of physical illnesses, Union Health Minister J P Nadda announced on Twitter on August 19. Three days before Mr Nadda’s tweet, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) had issued a directive that asked insurance companies to make provisions to cover mental illnesses in their policies along with physical illnesses. India’s progressive mental health legislation, the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017, kicked in on May 29 this year. According to the Act: “Every insurer shall make provisions for medical insurance for treatment of mental illness on the same basis as is available for treatment of physical illness.” According to the Union Ministry of Law and Justice, mental illness is defined as substantial disorder of thinking, mood, perception, orientation or memory that grossly impairs judgement, behaviour, the capacity to recognise reality or ability to meet the ordinary demands of life.

Both the IRDA directive and Mr Nadda’s announcement are steps in the right direction. This will benefit millions of patients as well as help create awareness about mental health issues in the country. According to the World Health Organisation, with more than 300 million people suffering from it, depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide, and a major contributor to the overall global burden of disease. In India, according to the National Mental Health Survey, 2016, carried out by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, an estimated 150 million people require mental health interventions. With only 5,615 psychiatrists — almost all of them in big cities and state or district capitals — registered with the Indian Psychiatric Society, there’s a clear paucity of professionals to diagnose and treat them.

Although mental health experts have welcomed the announcement, a few anomalies need to be addressed. The insurance market in India is yet to evolve when it comes to outpatient treatment. Typically, most health insurance policies pay only for hospitalisation. As things stand, an insurance policy is likely to cover the patient if the person is hospitalised owing to a mental illness but not cover counselling fees for a psychiatrist or medication. Only a small fraction of people with mental health ailments need hospitalisation. Thanks to the push from the government, once insurance firms switch to underwriting outpatient costs, it could encourage people to seek help and reduce the stigma.

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Discrepancies in two government-commissioned surveys, both a year apart, submitted in the Supreme Court show that over two lakh children, said to be residing in childcare homes, are “missing.”

A 2016-17 survey, commissioned by the Union Ministry of Women and Child Development, shows that 4.73 lakh children reside in care homes nationwide. However, the number of children in care homes came down to 2.61 lakh in the data submitted by the Centre before the Supreme Court in March 2018. The data were gathered by the Centre from the States.

‘Very disturbing’

The Bench of Justices Madan B. Lokur, S. Abdul Nazeer and Deepak Gupta said they found the disparity “very, very disturbing,” and children were not just numbers. “It shows how serious the problem is. What is to be done? It makes us feel very sad that children are treated only as numbers. They too have soul, they too have heart,” Justice Lokur said, when *amicus curiae* Aparna Bhat pointed out the discrepancy.

“We do not know what happened to the balance two lakh children. Either the childcare homes had given an inflated number of children to get more funds or these children are missing,” Justice Lokur observed orally.

The *amicus curiae* said that of the 9,589 childcare institutions across the country, 1,596 were overcrowded and 97 districts were without childcare homes. She referred to how children were subjected to corporal punishment and other abuses in these homes.

The court asked Ministry officials present how many children were missing in the country, “besides these two lakh.”

If the law was followed, in letter and in spirit, the horrific abuse of children at shelter homes in Muzaffarpur, Bihar, and in Deoria, Uttar Pradesh, could have been prevented, Justice Lokur observed.

The Bench proposed to set up oversight committees at the national and State levels to monitor the functioning of childcare homes. Counsel for the Centre sought time to seek instructions on the suggestion.

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Over 110 Central and State laws discriminate against leprosy patients. The biased provisions in these statutes were introduced prior to medical advancements; now, modern medicine (specifically, multi-drug therapy) completely cures the disease. These laws stigmatise and isolate leprosy patients and, coupled with age-old beliefs about leprosy, cause the patients untold suffering.

The Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018, seeks to make a start in amending these statutes. It attempts to end the discrimination against leprosy persons in various central laws: the Divorce Act, 1869; the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939; the Special Marriage Act, 1954; the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955; and the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act of 1956.

The Bill eliminates leprosy as a ground for dissolution of marriage or divorce. The condition under Section 18 (2) (c) of the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, that a Hindu wife is entitled to live separately from her husband without forfeiting her claim to maintenance if the latter is “suffering from a virulent form of leprosy”, has been omitted. The amendments introduced in the Bill omit the provisions which stigmatise and discriminate against leprosy-affected persons.

The Bill is meant to provide for the integration of leprosy patients into the mainstream. It is in keeping with the UN General Assembly Resolution of 2010 on the ‘Elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members’ that it was introduced. India has signed and ratified the Resolution.

The proposed law follows a National Human Rights Commission recommendation a decade ago to introduce amendments in personal laws and other statutes.

Further, the Rajya Sabha Committee on Petitions, in its 131st Report on ‘Petition praying for integration and empowerment of leprosy-affected persons’, had examined various statutes and desired that concerned Ministries and State governments urgently wipe clean the anachronistic and discriminatory provisions in prevalent statutes.

The Law Commission of India, in its 256th Report, ‘Eliminating discrimination against persons affected by leprosy’, had also recommended removing the discriminatory provisions in various statutes against leprosy patients.

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Extraordinary changes are required to prevent a ‘hothouse earth’ pathway

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WAYS TO READ THE CONSTITUTION


The arguments before the Supreme Court around the entry of women of a certain age to the Sabarimala temple in Kerala raise issues about religious freedom, gender equality and the right of women to worship. The petitioners have argued that discrimination based on biological reasons is not permissible going by the constitutional scheme. They maintain that due to the current exclusion, the right of women to worship the deity, Ayyappa, is violated.

On the other side, the Devaswom Board and others in support of the ban have cited it as an age-old custom. It forms a part of ‘essential religious practice’ of worshippers under Article 25 of the Constitution. It was also urged that matters such as who can or cannot enter the temple are covered under the rights to administer and manage religious institutions, under Article 26.

A specific argument made in the court, based on Article 17, triggers interesting thoughts on constitutional interpretation. In support of the petitioners, it was argued that the exclusion is a form of ‘untouchability’ since the exclusion is solely based on notions of purity and impurity. But this argument was resisted on the contention that the prohibition of untouchability was historically intended only to protect the interests of the backward classes. The claim is that the makers of the Constitution never envisioned including women within the ambit of untouchability.

The two arguments reflect the two approaches to reading the Constitution. The first is the ‘original intent’ approach which is based on the intent of the framers of the Constitution when they drafted the text. For example, an originalist will adopt a certain understanding of a constitutional right — say, the right to same-sex relationships under the right to liberty promised under Article 21 only if she is convinced that the drafters intended that. She may argue that the framers never thought of such a situation and, therefore, a same-sex couple cannot have a constitutional right under Article 21.

The Sabarimala singularity

In fact, a similar argument has been made in the debates in India on homosexuality. Article 15 enjoins the state from discriminating on grounds such as religion, caste and sex. By relying on the originalist approach, it was asserted that the makers of the Constitution meant the word ‘sex’ under Article 15 only in the binary sense of ‘male and female’.

Over time, originalism as a method of constitutional interpretation has been subject to serious criticism for being too rigid and inflexible. In B.C Motor Vehicle Reference (1985), the Canadian Supreme Court, while rejecting originalism, said that such a method would mean that “…the rights, freedoms and values embodied in the Charter in effect become frozen in time to the moment of adoption with little or no possibility of growth, development and adjustment to changing societal needs.”

The second approach — the ‘living tree’ doctrine — is very prominent in Canadian jurisprudence. It involves understanding the Constitution to be an evolving and organic instrument. For the living tree theorists, it matters little what the intentions were at the time of Constitution making. What matters the most is how the Constitution can be interpreted to contain rights in their broadest realm. The moral reading of the Constitution, propounded by Ronald Dworkin, also complements the living tree approach. Dworkin says in Freedom’s Law that
“according to the moral reading, these clauses must be understood in the way their language most naturally suggests: they refer to abstract moral principles and incorporate these by reference, as limits on government’s power.”

Certain observations about the abolition clause are important. Article 17 is emphatic in its wording: “Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.” It is peculiar since it abolishes a social practice in any form. All the other provisions in the same chapter lay down substantive fundamental rights.

In spite of the specific equality and anti-discrimination guarantees in the Constitution, Article 17 is inserted to specifically acknowledge and remove the social stigma associated with certain castes. It was enacted in an attempt to eradicate historical inequality. V.I. Muniswamy Pillai said in the Constituent Assembly that “the great thing that this Constitution brings to notice, not only to this country but to the whole world is the abolition of untouchability.”

The ‘living tree’ approach — being an alternative and a finer reading of the Constitution — supports a broader interpretation of Article 17. Now, even if the framers of the Constitution intended this provision to address a specific category of discrimination, what prevents the constitutional court from adopting an interpretation to include women under Article 17?

Women have been kept out of Sabarimala because of menstruation. As a distinct class, they are being discriminated against. If certain castes are considered ‘impure’ because of their social status, menstruating women are considered to be so because of their gender. The criteria are different but the effect of exclusion is common. It seems that such an interpretation does not do any violence to the language and content of Article 17, but only emancipates it.

In Living Originalism in India: Our Law and Comparative Constitutional Law (2013), Sujit Choudhry argues that untouchability and the exclusion of the homosexuals are comparable. He says that “the treatment which homosexuals experience today is similar in kind to that which ‘untouchables’ experienced and which prompted the adoption of Article 17, in that the treatment of homosexuals likewise flows from their social status.” This is a case where discrimination is based solely on sexual orientation.

Therefore, in essence, the Sabarimala case is a test case not only for freedom of religion and women’s rights but also for constitutional interpretation. It presents to the court an exemplary opportunity for an alternative reading of the Constitution. If the court indeed reads Article 17 to have a wider meaning, it will signal a new era of transformative constitutionalism in Indian jurisprudence.

Thulasi K. Raj is a lawyer in the Kerala High Court

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On its own, the Congress will find it difficult to dislodge the BJP in the Assembly elections

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RESTORING DIGNITY: ON STIGMA ATTACHED TO LEPROSY


It has long been a blot on Indian society that while leprosy is completely curable, there lingers a social stigma attached to it. Even more shocking is that colonial laws that predate leprosy eradication programmes and medical advancements remain on the statute book. These were unconscionably discriminatory from the beginning, but even in independent India, where the law has been an instrument for social change, the process of removing them has been bafflingly slow. The Lepers Act of 1898 was repealed only two years ago. It is time for concerted action to end the entrenched discrimination in law and society against those afflicted by it. Two recent developments hold out hope. One was the introduction of a Bill in Parliament to remove leprosy as a ground for seeking divorce or legal separation from one’s spouse, and the other was the Supreme Court asking the Centre whether it would bring in a positive law conferring rights and benefits on persons with leprosy and deeming as repealed all Acts and rules that perpetuated the stigma associated with it. The Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018, is only a small step. An affirmative action law that recognises the rights of those affected and promotes their social inclusion will serve a larger purpose. It may mark the beginning of the end to the culture of ostracisation that most of them face and help remove misconceptions about the disease and dispel the belief that physical segregation of patients is necessary. It is sad that it took so long to get such proposals on the legislative agenda.

Since last year, the Supreme Court has been hearing a writ petition by the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy seeking to uphold the fundamental rights of people with leprosy and the repeal of discriminatory laws against them. The court has been approaching the issue with sensitivity and is seeking to find legal means to ensure a life of dignity for them. The 256th Report of the Law Commission came up with a number of suggestions, including the repeal of discriminatory legal provisions. It listed for abolition personal laws and Acts on beggary. The report cited the UN General Assembly resolution of 2010 on the elimination of discrimination against persons with leprosy. The resolution sought the abolition of laws, rules, regulations, customs and practices that amounted to discrimination, and wanted countries to promote the understanding that leprosy is not easily communicable and is curable. The campaign to end discrimination against those afflicted, and combating the stigma associated with it, is decades old. While governments may have to handle the legislative part, society has an even larger role to play. It is possible to end discrimination by law, but stigma tends to survive reform and may require more than legal efforts to eliminate.

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The U.S. policy of separating children from undocumented migrant parents is cruel

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SC FINDS AUDIT OF CHILD SHELTERS ‘FRIGHTENING’

Of the 203 special adoption agencies, only eight deserved positive reviews.

Similarly, only 16% of the 172 observation homes audited till July 31, 2018, had all the required records of the children, like case histories and who are residing there. Again, out of 80 special homes/place of safety only 13% have the complete set of records.

The commission urged the court to direct the States to take positive measures to improve the condition of CCIs. The court said that had the authorities functioned properly, recent incidents like the one in Muzaffarpur in Bihar where several girls were allegedly raped and sexually abused in a shelter home would not have happened.

“It is very clear from this (NCPCR) report that nobody is interested. The court is helpless. If we do something, then it will be said that it is judicial activism,” Justice Lokur remarked orally.

Advocate Aparna Bhat, assisting the court as an amicus curiae in the matter, said directions from the top court was not judicial activism, as the welfare of children living in shelter homes was important. Ms. Bhat said the Secretary of the Ministry of Women and Child Development has written to Chief Secretaries of all States to conduct inspection of CCIs and submit a report by September 15.

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SPEEDING UP THE ADOPTION PROCESS


Early this January, the Supreme Court observed that the “future of the country depends on our children”. Yet, an affidavit filed by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights shows that of 203 special adoption agencies audited, merely eight deserved positive reviews. It has been observed that there is an inordinate delay in issuing adoption orders by the courts due to the heavy workload.

As of July 20, 2018, there are 629 cases for adoption pending in various courts across the country. Due to delay in the issuing of adoption orders by the courts, children continue to stay in childcare institutions, even after getting a family.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill of 2018 seeks to remedy the situation. In the best interest of the child, it proposes to amend the Juvenile Justice Act to empower the District Magistrate, instead of the court, to issue adoption orders. This would ensure timely processing of adoption cases and provide orphaned, abandoned and surrendered children with familial care and protection.


Chapter 8 of this Act deals with adoption. Subsection (1) of Section 56 of the Act says “adoption shall be resorted to for ensuring right to family for the orphaned, abandoned and surrendered children.” Section 63 of the Act states that the adoption is final on the issuance of the adoption order by the court concerned. Subsection (2) of Section 61 of the Act provides that “the adoption proceedings shall be held in camera and the case shall be disposed of by the court within a period of two months from the date of filing the adoption.”

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India will host the inaugural round of the two-plus-two dialogue with the United States on September 6.

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