



Editor's Column

The Central Government has decided to introduce a unique scheme that will help working women avoid wage loss during pregnancy.

Under the Conditional Maternity Benefit scheme, which is open to women from both BPL (below poverty line) and APL (above poverty line) families, Rs. 4,000 will be extended to every pregnant and lactating mother to compensate for their loss of wages or salary as the case might be.

The scheme will be for women, who are 19 or above and for the first two births, including still births. It will be over and above the Rs. 1400 in rural areas and Rs. 1500 in urban areas as a woman gets under the health

ministry's Janani Suraksha Yojana to promote institutional delivery. About 50,000 women are expected to benefit from it in each district.

However, those working in government organisations and public sector units (PSUs) will not be covered under the scheme as

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New Maternity Scheme for Women

government health schemes are available to them. The aim is to improve the health and nutrition status of pregnant and lactating mothers and infants and an amount of Rs. 4500 crore has already been allocated under the 11th Five Year Plan for the scheme.

The money meant for each beneficiary, who will be registered with an Anganwadi centre, will

be paid in three instalments – Rs. 1,500 in each instalment, right up to six months after the birth of the child.

Working women, like private school teachers, salesgirls, maidservants, factory workers, housewives, and those working in the unorganised sector, can avail of its benefits provided they get themselves registered with the nearest anganwadi centres during pregnancy.

The scheme will, particularly, benefit those who are not paid maternity leave.

The scheme, if properly implemented, will also help monitor and prevent infant mortality, maternal mortality, malnutrition, early marriage, female foeticide, as well as promote safe delivery.

Making a difference

An 18-year old prevented the child marriage of her two minor sisters aged 15 and 12. The girl, who lives in Subbasadi village near Bawal in Rewari, approached the District Protection and Child Marriage Prohibition Officer against her father, Chhotu Ram for violating the Child Marriage Prohibition Act. Thereafter, an injunction restraining him from solemnising the marriages was issued.

Chhotu Ram had fixed the wedding of his three daughters - aged 18, 15 and 12 - with three brothers of Kanhora village. The ceremony was to take place on November 27.

The District Protection and Child Marriage Prohibition Officer visited Subbasadi village, a day after she received the complaint. After verifying the matter, she then filed a suit before Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate seeking a judicial order. Chhotu Ram also submitted an affidavit in court pledging that he would not marry off his minor daughters. The injunction also made it clear that if he did, their marriages would be illegal. Later, only the eldest daughter (18) was married on the fixed date.

Workshop on Dayan Pratha

The National Commission for Women in collaboration with UGC Women Studies and some other institutes organised a workshop on Dayan Pratha and its evil affect in Udaipur.

Speaking on the occasion, NCW Chairperson Dr. Girija Vyas said that superstition and retrogressive mindset were responsible for naming some women as 'dayan'. These women are blamed for all kinds of ills, including national calamity, excessive rainfall, drought, economic hardship and even for others' childlessness.

She said that the civil society, the media and the NGOs must work together to remove the superstitious beliefs from the minds of the people. The so-called 'dayans' must be rehabilitated by providing them with pension, job opportunities, education and proper health care. The police must also be sensitised and there should be stringent legal action against those, who stigmatise some hapless women as 'dayan', she added.



Dr. Girija Vyas addressing the gathering



Ms. Vijaylaxmi Chauhan and Dr. Girija Vyas at the workshop on Dayan Pratha

● Failure to explain wife's death can lead to husband's conviction : HC

The Delhi High Court has said that a man's failure to explain the mysterious death of his wife in her matrimonial home can lead to his conviction.

As per the Indian Penal Code, a man and his immediate family are natural suspects under Section 498 (A) in case of his wife's unnatural death within the first seven years of their marriage. The police, on receiving a complaint, should, as a mandatory exercise probe if the woman was subjected to dowry harassment.

In the case of an unnatural death of the wife on a premise to which an outsider may not have any access, it is for the husband to explain the ground for the unnatural death of his wife. The husband having failed to do so can be convicted under Section 302 of the IPC.

● Dowry law applies to live-in partner

Coercing a woman for money even in a live-in relationship amounts to dowry harassment, a trial court in New Delhi has held while sentencing a man to life imprisonment. The court went by the woman's dying declaration that the man she lived with set her on fire when she refused to give him the money.

While the convict claimed that he was a married man and was not legally wedded to the victim and even the prosecution failed to prove his marital connection with the deceased, the court trashed his argument on the ground that "no one at the point of death is presumed to lie".

● Maintenance even if together for short period

A woman in a short-term live-in relationship with her partner is also entitled to maintenance under the Domestic Violence Act.

A New Delhi city court has directed a man to pay Rs. 75,000 per month as maintenance to his live-in partner of more than 20 years from the date of filing the complaint till disposal of the complaint.

The Metropolitan Magistrate said, "The provision does not say that they (living partners) should have lived for a particular period or for a few days".

● SBI dumps norm denying posting, promotion to pregnant women

Women across the country could be said to have scaled yet another obstacle to their relentless quest for equality of opportunity with the State Bank of India (SBI), bowing to public opinion, has dumped a discriminatory norm that denied immediate posting and promotion to pregnant women.

The SBI has issued instructions to its local head offices across the country to the effect that pregnancy should no longer be treated as a disability for immediate appointment or promotion. The directive will be applicable to its associate banks as well.

Members' Visits

Sponsored by the National Commission for Women, a state-level seminar on Empowerment of Women for Sustainable Economic Development through Handloom and Handicrafts, was recently held at Guwahati. Chief Minister Shri Tarun Gogoi was the chief guest.



Shri Tarun Gogoi addressing the seminar. Sitting on the dias are Minister, Social Welfare and Ms. Neeva Konwar

NCW member Ms. Neeva Konwar as the special guest spoke on the need for economic upliftment for empowerment of women and suggested that there should be proper training programmes for the benefit of women.

About 400 participants from all over the state attended the seminar presided over by Ms. Mridula Saharia, Chairperson, State Women's Commission.

1/3 of child brides in world are from India

According to a UNICEF report, more than a third of the world's child brides are from India, leaving children at an increased risk of exploitation despite the country's growing modernity and economic wealth.

Nearly 25 million women in India were married in the year 2007 by the age of 18, said the report which noted that children in India and Nepal may be engaged or married even before they turned 10.

97% women in Delhi feel unsafe only 20% trust police : Survey

Painting a gloomy picture of 'women safety' in Delhi, a survey report based on the responses of women in the age group of 12-55 living in New Delhi and Old Delhi across the major socio-economic strata, just before next year's Commonwealth Games states that 97% women feel vulnerable and only 20% trust the police to take care of them in crisis.

NGO 'Cequin' (Centre for Equality and Inclusion) in its survey report says surprisingly city's most crowded places - Connaught Place, Karol Bagh and Chandni Chowk - were considered its 'most unsafe areas'.

Alarming, over 98% of women here had experienced some sort of harassment, the survey said, adding while 36% experienced harassment 'occasionally', 19% experienced it 'very often' and 6% 'daily'.

Adding to the shocking revelations, the survey says the public transport system, that is the bus, was for women (82%) the 'most unsafe' mode to travel in Delhi, and that the most unsafe time for women was afternoon.

Painting a dismal picture of Delhities, it also said that 88% of women emphasised that a harassed woman is 'rarely or never' helped by the public, while 95% preferred indoors 'due to sheer fear of being harassed', and a mere 6% sought the police's help.

The report adds that 60% felt girls below ten years of age were 'most vulnerable' while 44% of women

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chose to 'remain silent' after a harassment, exposing the lack of trust in grievance addressal by competent authorities and a lack of proper legal system to deal with such offences in the country's capital.

Law needed to stop men from converting to avoid bigamy

In a move aimed at stopping opportunistic conversion, the Law Commission has recommended insertion of a new section in the Hindu Marriage Act to prevent men from converting for remarriage unless the first one is dissolved as per law.

In its latest report submitted to the law ministry the Law Commission said, "Married men, whose personal law does not allow bigamy, have been resorting to the unhealthy and immoral practice of converting to Islam for the sake of contracting a second bigamous marriage".

The Commission has recommended that a new Section-17A - be inserted in the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, to the effect that a married person, whose marriage is governed by the Act, cannot marry again even after changing his religion, unless the first marriage is dissolved as per law and offences relating to bigamy under Sections 494-495 of the IPC be made cognizable by necessary amendment in the Cr.P.C.

The Commission has also recommended that proviso to Section 4 of Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939 - saying that this section would not apply to a married woman, who was originally a non-muslim if she reverts to her original faith - be deleted.