



Editor's Column

The Union Health Ministry, taking a pragmatic view, has made recommendations for amending the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (MTPA) and said that a woman, irrespective of whether she is married or single, should be given the choice of abortion. "Failure of contraceptive" and "unplanned pregnancy" would be considered as lawful reasons for abortion among all women. Currently, (MTPA), recognises these two reasons for abortion only in the case of married women.

At present, nearly seven million abortions are conducted every year in India, out of which, only 50 percent are safe. About 8 percent opting for abortion die due to complications arising from unsafe

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ABORTION RIGHTS

abortions or for approaching quacks for termination of pregnancy.

Admittedly, there cannot be maternal health without reproductive health. And reproductive health includes women's right to decide whether to give birth to an unwanted

child. Right to abortion, is thus, a vital component of gender equality and gender justice.

Along with expanding the scope of law with regard to abortion, time has come to enhance the legal limit of abortion from 20 weeks, as many brain-related abnormalities show up only after 20 weeks. Moreover, with alarming rise of crimes against women, particularly, sex crimes like rapes, women must be given the option of deciding whether she has the wherewithal to raise an unwanted child or give birth to the child of a criminal rapist.

Important Decisions

- The Delhi High Court has ruled that a child born out of rape, either of a minor or a woman, who is an adult, is clearly a victim of the act of an offender and entitled to compensation, independent of the amount of compensation paid to his or her mother.
- The government has liberalised passport rules, making it easier for single mothers, adopted children or divorced applicants to get their passports, reducing paperwork and documentation. "This will enable single parents to apply for their children to issue passports where the name of the father or the mother is not required to be printed at the request of the applicant." Separated or divorced applicants will not have to mention the name of his or her spouse and divorced applicants will not have to provide even the divorce decree.
- The Kerala High Court has permitted employment of women in IMFL stores by declaring the rules against it unconstitutional. Ruling that such a policy is in violation of constitutional provisions regarding equality before law (Article 14) and gender-based discrimination (Article 15). The court was considering two petitions filed by seven women from Kollam, who were denied jobs with the state beverages corporation (BEVCO) despite being included in the rank list.

From the PPMRC Cell

The Commission has signed an MOU with the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj on 9th November, 2016, for taking up activities for women empowerment and gender mainstreaming in general and engaging with elected women representatives for their capacity building so as to enable them to participate in nation building activities; undertake research activities; create master trainers in various sectors, who will, in turn, work with women.

Creating Safe Cities

The Centre for Social Research (CSR) organised a roundtable conference on Creating Safe Cities in New Delhi. The objective of the conference was to help design a programme for initiating action on crimes against women in order to respond more effectively to the issues of gender-based violence and to develop preventive measures to protect women from violence.

Speaking at the conference, NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam said that the government or the police alone could not address the problem of rising crimes against women; what needed to be done was to involve communities and all stakeholders. Ms Ranjana Kumari, Director CSR, spoke about the growing incidents of violence against women in public places. Other speakers, who gave their recommendations, included police officers, lawyers, social activists, etc.



At the conference (from left) Ms Ranjana Kumari, (extreme right) Ms Lalitha Kumaramangalam with other panelists and participants.

National Convention on Forest Rights

A National Convention on Community Forest Rights was organised by CFR Learning Advocacy Process in New Delhi. The Convention is part of a national initiative for learning and collective action to support efforts towards better implementation of the provisions of the Forest Rights Act (FRA).

The significance of this Act for women lies in its potential to enable them to claim entitlements as well as to engage in the process of grassroots planning and management of these vital resources on which their lives and livelihood are dependent.

Speaking on the occasion, NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam discussed the gender concerns in the context of FRA.



The Chairperson addressing the convention

Do you know?

- There is just one woman judge in the Supreme Court and only 69 women judges out of 652 judges in the High Courts.
- Researchers from Kyoto University in Japan have found that young children, whose mothers smoked during pregnancy were more likely to show signs of kidney damage compared to non-smoking mothers.
- The vast majority of all human trafficking victims- some 71 percent -are women and girls and one-third are children.

Single Women's Rights

The annual advisory meeting of the National Forum for Single Women was held on 17th November in New Delhi. NCW Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam, was the the chief guest at the opening session. The National Forum is a single women's organisation and represents issues and concerns of over 1,22,000 single women members - widows, separated, divorced, abandoned, deserted, older - never married and others. The meeting was attended by around 130 single women leaders from 14 states of India.

The opening session focused on the issue of separated women - an especially vulnerable and invisible category within single women. The natal and marital families do not support her, nor does she have a socially accepted claim over family resources. She does not have any legal or government-accepted papers to verify that she is "single" like widows do. This means that she is unable to access government support for herself or her dependent children. The forum is working to ensure that separated women get their dues.



The Chairperson addressing the Single Women Forum

Jan Sunwai

- The National Commission for Women organized a "Mahila Jan Sunwai" at Shimla in Himachal Pradesh on 17-18th December, 2016. Member Rekha Sharma alongwith Counsellor Varun Chhabra and JTE Geeta Singh attended the Sunwai conducted in collaboration with the District Police and the District Legal Services Authority. Out of 70 cases, 60 cases were closed and in the remaining 10 cases, the Member issued directions to the concerned police authorities to take appropriate action.
- The Commission organized a "Mahila Jan Sunwai" in Patna on 20-21st December, 2016. Member Sushma Sahu and an NCW team conducted the Sunwai.

Intervention by NCW

- The Commission received a complaint from a woman constable against her senior officer alleging sexual harassment at workplace. The Commission asked the Superintendent of police to look into the matter and take appropriate action in accordance with law and send an action taken report within 15 days. However, failing to receive an action taken report, Member Rekha Sharma along with JTE Geeta Singh, visited the office of the SSP at Noida. As the SSP was on leave, Ms Sharma along with SP enquired into the matter in the presence of the complainant. Later, the SP submitted a copy of the report prepared by the Internal Complaints Committee, which admitted misconduct on the part of the Inspector. The SP assured that appropriate action would be taken against the respondent.
- The Commission received a complaint from an M.phil student of Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida, against a professor, pertaining to sexual harassment at workplace. Not getting justice from the University, the complainant approached the police. However, the complainant alleged that the police was not filing the charge sheet in spite of having sufficient evidence. Member Rekha Sharma along with Geeta Singh and City SP enquired into the matter in the presence of the complainant and her father and brother. Ms Anju Tewariya, incharge of the women cell presented the status report. The Member discussed the report with SP about the case and subsequently a charge sheet was filed in the court.
- The National Commission for Women Chairperson Lalitha Kumaramangalam in a letter to the Chief Minister of Bihar has urged him to take action against Bhagalpur police officials, who had beaten up and misbehaved with women in front of the office of the District Magistrate. The Commission has also sent a notice to the Bihar Director General of Police and asked for an action taken report within seven days.

Members' Visits

◆ Member Rekha Sharma was the chief guest at an Awareness Seminar on Women's Rights, organised by the Human Rights Association of India at Kota in Rajasthan. The Member addressed women of all ages and urged them to fight for their rights. Later, she discussed their problems. ● The Member as the chief guest attended a national consultation on the "Challenges of Access to Social and Media Support and



Member Rekha Sharma (centre) conducting the Jan Sunwai at Shimla. Ms. Geeta Singh & Varun Chhabra are on her right.

Justice for Survivors of Rape and Sexual abuse", organised by Jan Sahas and Rashtriya Garima Abhiman. ● Member Sushma Sahu attended a capacity building programme for women police officers at the Kerala Police Academy at Thrissur.

Suo motu cognizance

- The National Commission has taken suo motu cognizance of a report that appeared in the Times of India wherein it has been reported that a rape victim has been harassed by the police by asking irrelevant and insensitive questions. An enquiry committee headed by Member Sushma Sahu, alongwith Advocate Ms. Subhalaxmi, Mr. V.R. Raman, PS to the Chairperson has been set up to enquire into the matter.
- The Commission has taken suo motu cognizance of a report that appeared in Dainik Bhaskar wherein it was reported that a newly married woman, who objected to her husband's drinking, was severely thrashed by her husband with a belt. The Commission has asked the SP of Bhojpur district in Bihar for an action taken report with seven days.

From the Legal Cell

- A law review consultation on Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace, 2013, was held on 28th November in Mumbai. Member Rekha Sharma and Sr. Co-ordinator Lilabati attended it.
- A capacity - building programme for Kerala women police officers was held at the Kerala Police Academy, at Thrissur from 14 to 16th November and a similar programme for Telangana women police officers was conducted by CDTS, at Hyderabad from 14 to 16th November.

Complaints received by NCW in December, 2016

Month	Complaints Received	Action Taken Reports received	Complaints Closed
December 2016	1290	673	908

The Commission took suo motu cognizance of 16 cases in December, 2016.

for further information visit our website at : www.ncw.nic.in

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