

“No one has the power to shatter your dreams unless you give it to them.”

Maeve Greyson

NEW LEGISLATION FOR COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TOWARDS ANTI-TRAFFICKING

Ministry of Women and Child Development is undertaking several measures to combat trafficking of women & children.

The Government of India is undertaking several measures to combat trafficking. The new proposed legislation on trafficking of persons aims to prevent trafficking of persons, to provide care, protection and rehabilitation to the victims of trafficking, to prosecute offenders and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

It envisages establishment of well coordinated institutional mechanisms at District, State and National level for prevention and investigation of offences and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking. It also provides for confiscation, attachment and forfeiture of properties of persons convicted of offences punishable under the proposed legislation.

In addition, it defines some new forms of trafficking as aggravated or otherwise and proposes creation of a dedicated Rehabilitation Fund for rehabilitation of victims of trafficking.

The Ministry is implementing the scheme of Ujjawala for prevention of trafficking and rescue, rehabilitation, re-integration and repatriation of victims of trafficking. The scheme provides for their rehabilitation through shelter, food, counseling, medical and legal aid and vocational training, under the Ujjawala scheme, 162 Protective and rehabilitative Homes have been set up which can accommodate upto 8100 trafficked victims.

Besides, the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA), 1956 supplemented by the Indian Penal Code prohibits trafficking in human beings for the purpose of prostitution and lays down severe penalties for trafficking.

The ITPA, 1956 also provides for protective homes and corrective institutions. The legislations as per the requirement are reviewed from time to time. Similarly the

scheme has an inbuilt mechanism for periodic evaluation.

NATIONAL HEALTH POLICY

The Government has formulated and brought out National Health Policy, 2017, which aims at attainment of the highest possible level of good health and well-being, through a preventive and promotive health care orientation in all developmental policies, and universal access to good quality health care services without anyone having to face financial hardship as a consequence

The National Health Policy, 2017 states following targets for reduction in incidence and prevalence of certain disease conditions:

1. HIV/AIDS: Achieve global target of 2020 (also termed as target of 90:90:90)
2. Eliminate Leprosy by 2018, Kala-Azar by 2017 and Lymphatic Filariasis in endemic pockets by 2017
3. Eliminate Tuberculosis by 2025: Achieving and maintaining a cure rate of >85% in new sputum positive patients and reduce incidence of new cases.
4. Reduce prevalence of blindness to 0.25/1000 by 2025 and disease burden by one third from current levels.
5. Reduce premature mortality from cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases by 25% by 2025.

“Public Health and Hospitals” being a State subject, the primary responsibility for providing affordable health services lies with respective State/UT Governments.

Technical and financial support under the National Health Mission (NHM) is being provided to States/UTs for strengthening their health system for provision of universally accessible affordable and quality healthcare.

DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY FOR WOMEN

Draft National Policy for Women 2017 Envisions Women Attaining Full Potential and Participating as Equal Partners the Ministry of Women and Child Development has prepared the draft National Policy for Women, 2017 after considering suggestions/comments received from stakeholders.

The draft has been examined and approved by the Group of Ministers and has been submitted to the Cabinet for consideration. The Draft envisions a society in which women attain their full potential and are able to participate as equal partners in all spheres of life.

The draft policy addresses the diverse needs of women through identified priority areas: (i) Health including food security and nutrition, (ii) Education, (iii) Economy (including agriculture, industry, labour, employment, NRI women, soft power, service sector, science and technology), Violence against women, (iv) Governance and decision making (v) Violence Against Women (vi) Enabling environment (including housing, shelter and infrastructure, drinking water and sanitation, media and culture, sports and social security) (vii) Environment and climate change.

Draft policy envisages efforts to be taken up to address the special needs of single women such as widows, separated, divorced, never-married and deserted women including women-headed households and single women living within households.

NITI AAYOG TO WORK ON MECHANISM FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE

NITI Aayog to work on mechanism for implementation of Minimum Support Price (MSP) for different agricultural crops.

In light of the Finance Minister's budget announcement that NITI Aayog will develop and put in place a fool-proof mechanism for implementation of Minimum Support Price (MSP) for different agricultural crops.

In our country, MSP for 24 agricultural commodities of Kharif and Rabi season are announced by the Government based on the

recommendations of the Commission for Agriculture Cost and Prices (CACP). However, procurement by Central and State Agencies is limited to rice and wheat and some amount of coarse cereals. The Government also procures limited quantity of oil seed and pulses through NAFED, SFAC and some other agencies. The market intervention scheme (MIS) is implemented in case of the prices falling below the threshold level in perishable crops.

Three concepts were discussed at the meeting.

- Procurement by States and compensation of losses up to certain extent of MSP after the procurement and price realization out of sale of the procured produce.
- If the sale price is below a modal price then the farmers may be compensated to the difference between MSP and actual price subject to a ceiling which may not exceed 25% of the MSP. No compensation would be due if modal price in neighboring States is above the MSP.
- procurement by private entrepreneurs at MSP and Government providing some policy and tax incentives and a commission to such private entities which may be decided on the basis of transparent criteria and bidding for the empanelment of private players by the State Government to do the procurement operations.

NITI Aayog brought it up front to all the States to immediately modify the APMC acts and implement the Model APLMC Act, 2017. It also emphasized the States Government's responsibility in efficiently implementing the schemes.

MEETING TO REVIEW THE PROGRESS OF TRANSFORMATION OF 115 BACKWARD DISTRICTS

A meeting chaired by the cabinet secretary was recently held to review the progress of the transformation of 115 Aspirational Districts.

The meeting was attended by the Prabhari Officers, the officer in-charge coordinating the exercise for transformation of 115 Aspirational

Districts along with the Secretaries and representatives from 12 Union ministries.

The Government, in November 2017, identified 115 backward districts for rapid transformation by 2022. The government's focus is to work with states to bring a transformative change in these backward areas through rapid government-anchored programmes and interventions by 2022, the 75th year of India's independence.

For each of the Districts, a senior official in the rank of Additional secretary and Joint secretary has been nominated as Prabhari officer.

Prabhari officers would take it up as a challenge and succeed in their mission by making a difference in the lives of millions of citizens in these districts. Prabhari officers would form a team with State representatives and bring convergence in their effort.

Prabhari officers will assist the District administration in sharing the vision for 2022, to ensure the convergence of the efforts of central and state government and to set up a robust mechanism to monitor the improvements in key outcomes in the district.

Funds are not a constraint in this program since large funds are available under different Schemes. The officers will explore the availability of funds in District Mineral funds, wherever available for this purpose. In addition, they will also use flexi-fund which are significant in amount and are available under different Schemes of the Government.

The 115 districts, including 35 affected by left-wing extremism, were selected on parameters like deprivation (extent of landless households), health & nutrition (institutional delivery, stunting of children and wasting in children), education (elementary dropout rate and adverse pupil-teacher ratio) and infrastructure (un-electrified homes, lack of toilets, villages not connected by road and lack of drinking water).

I- METROS

"I – Metros" -an association of all Indian Metro Rail companies has been launched.

I- Metros:

"I-Metros" is proposed to be a platform to provide a forum for exchange of ideas, pooling of knowledge and sharing of experience, best practices, innovations etc. among the Indian Metro rail companies to nurture excellence in performance.

This society will be registered under Society Registration Act-1860.

The objective of forming this association is to provide a common platform for all Metro rail companies for sharing experience, information, best practices, innovations etc.

This association will also undertake and promote techno-economic studies and research. It will safeguard the interest and rights of metro rail companies and will be resource tank of information for decision making.

GOVERNMENT HAS EXPANDED THE BETI BACHAO BETI PADHAO PROGRAMME TO ALL 640 DISTRICTS

The government has expanded the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao programme from 161 districts to all the 640 districts in India.

Initial focus of BBBP had been on the districts which were either below national average or were the worse in their own states in terms of absolute values of CSR. However, looking at the magnitude and criticality of the problem and its spread across the country, it was felt that no district can be left out of BBBP ambit to make a real dent on overall child sex ratio.

BBBP:

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme was launched in January, 2015. The scheme is aimed at promoting gender equality and the significance of educating girls.

The Scheme is targeted at improving the Child Sex Ratio through multi sectoral interventions including prevention of gender biased sex selection and promoting girls' education and her holistic empowerment.

It is a tri-ministerial effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development.

The low and falling child sex ratio in the country is a matter of policy concern, not only because it violates the human rights of unborn and infant girls but also because it deprives the country of the potential economic and social contribution of these 'missing women'.

In addition, there may be longer-run adverse impacts from a marriage market squeeze caused by an excess supply of male relative to female youth. Already, states like Haryana and Punjab, where the sex ratio has been extremely distorted for several decades, have been experiencing bride trafficking.

A NEW STATE OF MATTER CREATED

An international team of physicists have successfully created a "giant atom" and filled it with ordinary atoms, creating a new state of matter termed "Rydberg polarons". These atoms are held together by a weak bond and are created at very cold temperatures.

Polaron :

It uses ideas from two different fields: Bose Einstein Condensation and Rydberg atoms.

A BEC (Bose Einstein Condensate) is a liquid-like state of matter that occurs at very low temperatures. A BEC can be perturbed to create excitations which are akin to ripples on a lake. Here, researchers have used a BEC of strontium atoms.

Electrons in an atom move in orbits around the nucleus. A 'Rydberg atom' is an atom in which an electron has been kicked out to a very large orbit. These have interesting properties and have been studied for a long time.

In this work, researchers used laser light on a BEC of strontium atoms so that it impinges on one strontium atom at a time. This excites an electron into a large orbit, forming a Rydberg atom. This orbit is large enough to encircle many other strontium atoms inside it.

As the electron moves around many strontium atoms, it generates ripples of the BEC. The Rydberg atom becomes inextricably mixed with these ripples and forms a new super-atom called a 'Rydberg polaron'.

This experiment can suggest ways to detect dark matter that it is a cosmic Bose-Einstein Condensate, perhaps composed of an as-yet-unknown type of particle.

WHO LAUNCHES PLAN FOR CHEAPER TB DRUGS

The WHO has invited pharmaceutical companies around the world to submit proposals to manufacture affordable versions of newer medicines for treatment of drug resistant tuberculosis.

WHO has now requested drug makers to submit an Expression of Interest (EoI) for Bedaquiline and Delamanid, two new-generation drugs, recommended for drug resistant-TB.

Under WHO norms, drugs submitted upon such requests and complying with its standards are included in a list for procurement by the UN and other organisations.

The aim is to replicate the success of addressing the HIV epidemic.

For example, competition among Indian drug producers had then brought down the price of HIV medicines by 99% from \$15,000 per patient per year to less than a dollar a day.

Also, one of the aims of is to ensure that a greater number of manufacturers are supplying quality medicines, which, in turn, means a more competitive market and more affordable prices.

India has nearly 1.3 lakh DR-TB patients, the most in the world, but the Health Ministry gets only 10,000 doses of Bedaquiline and 400 doses of Delamanid.

The medicines are obtained as donations from Janssen (US) and Otsuka Pharmaceuticals (Japan), the respective manufacturers.
