

Newspaper Clips

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Lokpal may get free hand to go after babus

Himanshi Dhawan | TNN

New Delhi: The joint drafting committee on the Lokpal Bill made headway on Saturday over contentious procedures for sanctioning prosecution of public servants. A consensus emerged over the need to review laws that have been criticized for shielding corrupt officials.

Civil society sources on the panel said

► Agreement on selection panel, P 17

the proposed lokpal may not need permission for prosecution while investigating offences with amendments being considered to Section 19 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, Section 197 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Delhi Police Establishment Act Section 6A.

The Delhi Police Establishment Act governs CBI, and the agency cannot prosecute an official in a corruption case without sanction from the Centre.

These three legislations deal with officials and an investigating authority

STEP FORWARD?

► Govt may review laws—Prevention of Corruption Act, CrPC and Delhi Police Establishment Act. The proposed Lokpal may not need permission for prosecution of officials

► On sanctions for judiciary, it was decided to have more discussions

► The issue of waiving sanction for elected representatives may raise hackles. As of now, the presiding officer of the respective House has to give his assent

needs to seek permission from the Central or state governments before starting prosecution after an investigation establishes an anti-corruption case.

On sanctions for judiciary, the committee — comprising five civil society members and an equal number of ministers — felt more discussion is needed.

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Agreement on broad-based selection panel for Lokpal appointment

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While there might be some agreement on prosecution of officials, sanctions for elected representatives are likely to raise hackles of the political class. As of now, the presiding officer of the House to which an MLA, MLC or MP belongs needs to grant sanction.

Civil society members argued that prosecution of a member of the judiciary should not be dependent on permission of the chief justice concerned. Their version of the pro-

posed Lokpal Bill has suggested that sanction be considered by a seven-member bench of the anti-corruption ombudsman. The issue is likely to be discussed further during the panel's next meeting on May 23. The committee agreed on basic principles of the proposed legislation like transparency in selection process and autonomy of the Lok Pal. Senior lawyer Prashant Bhushan said there was agreement on various issues like transparency in the appointment of Lokpal, autonomy of the ombudsman and financial independence for such an office.

RTI activist Arvind Kejriwal said, "The model on which the financial independence will be based is yet to be decided. Various models were discussed, including from other countries and of institutions like the SC, CAG and the CVC."

There was agreement on a broad-based selection panel for appointing the Lokpal, the discussions also covered on the need for having similar ombudsmen at the state level. HRD Minister Kapil Sibal said more discussions were needed on having state-level Lokpals as consultations with state.

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17 Jamia students on strike

New Delhi: Seventeen students of AJK MCRC, Jamia Millia Islamia called for an indefinite hunger strike on Saturday to protest against the university's decision to bar them from taking the final exams for falling short of attendance. The students said they had more than 60% attendance and their medical certificates entitled them to a relaxation of 15% in their attendance as per university rules. After high court dismissed their petitions, the students decided to go on a hunger strike. On Saturday morning, the students of mass communication began the strike with two of them down with fever by the end of the day. Students said, they faced opposition from the police deployed in the area. **TNN**

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Let not new tech emerge from India: Prez to US

Washington: US President Barack Obama wants America to stay ahead in the global race for clean energy innovation and wants his country to make sure that new technological breakthroughs do not take place in India and China.

In his address to the workers at a transmission plant in Indiana, Obama said there is a growing realisation across the world that clean energy technology is the way to the future. "We're in a competition

all around the world, and other countries—Germany, China, South Korea—they know that clean energy tech is what is going



AMERICAN DREAM

to help spur job creation and economic growth for years to come," Obama said.

"This is why," he said, "we've got to we win that competition." Obama has time and again told Americans to tighten up in education and innovation to keep intact their lead over rapidly advancing countries like India and China. "I don't want the new breakthrough technologies taking place in China and India," the US President said. Rather, he said, he wants all those jobs generated in the US with US workers, American know-how and American ingenuity. ¶¶

Education needs a mechanism like RTI Act

On Record
by Aditi Tandon

In her second term as Chairperson of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), Shanta Sinha is tasked with an onerous responsibility of monitoring the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, which guarantees a slew of rights to children aged 6 to 14 years. The Act names NCPCR as an independent monitoring agency for its progress and gives the Commission immense powers to ensure that legal entitlements of children are respected and kept. The NCPCR is also responsible for protecting children from corporal punishment and other crimes, including sexual offences. Padma Shri and Ramon Magsaysay Award winner (2003) Shanta Sinha speaks to The Tribune about the challenges of keeping children safe.

Q: How do you view the pace of the RTE Act's progress?
A: The RTE Act, guaranteeing elementary education as every

child's right, is laudable. But we need a national awareness campaign to drive home the nuances of this law, whose provisions resonate with the aspirations of the poorest. The Centre must evolve actionable points for nationwide advocacy of the Act. A message must go out that we mean business. The last person in the street must know what the law provides.

Q: Is the Act worthwhile in its present form or does it need fine-tuning?

A: The Commission strongly feels that the Act doesn't provide for a grievance redressal mechanism. We have asked the HRD Ministry to see that the states define such mechanisms in RTE model rules. We can't have one authority redressing all the grievances that arise out of the complex set of entitlements given to the child.

We need clarity on who will uphold which right and in what time frame the custodian of such a right redress grievance related to its violation. We must consider for the RTE Act the complaint registration and redressal system, the Right to Information Act uses. We also need block-level grievance redressal officers for the RTE Act.

Q: Corporal punishment has attained menacing proportions though the RTE Act bans it. What are you doing to check it?

A: We are in the process of finalising guidelines against corporal punishment at schools. An expert group is working on these guidelines, which would then be notified and sent to schools through the HRD Ministry. These guidelines will help us implement Section 17 of the RTE Act which bars corporal punishment.

Q: Another issue is crimes against children, especially sexual offences. Do you think the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Bill, 2011, recently introduced in the Rajya Sabha, would suffice?

A: It's significant that we have this law. But many of its provisions would have to be sharpened if children's best interests are to be guarded. The Act focuses hugely on how an offence would be tried. It must focus equally on protection for children who report the crimes. Our entire jurisprudence system is designed for adults as perpetrators and adults as victims. That must change. A child must be given protection right from the stage of

recording of the complaint.

Q: Rising crimes against the girl child are one of the factors fuelling an already dismal child sex ratio. What needs to be done?

A: Child sex ratio has dipped alarmingly even in some progressive southern states. That's shocking. But we must look at the states that have posted gains in Census 2011 provisional figures. Punjab and Haryana have improved their performance though they continue to be the worst.

We must find out what they did right to register gains and see if we can replicate the effort. To get shifts in secondary data is significant. It will take us a generation to correct the aberration but we must know what to do to effect that change.

Q: Do you think we need to revisit the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostics Techniques Act?

A: The Act, as such, is fine. What we need is its effective implementation. Penalties must get stringent and punishments harder, now that there is evidence of how much is at stake.

Q: The Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005, under which the



Shanta Sinha

NCPCR came up, had mandated the establishment of children's courts to deal with their issues. Is there any progress on that front?

A: Goa has set up children's court and Delhi is expected to follow suit. Frankly, I don't think it's a good idea. We visited the Goa court and found the atmosphere so informal that the accused had virtually lost all fear of the law.

Jurisprudence, to yield the desired results, must inspire awe. Our normal court systems, with some modifications, can serve the children well. We need not exclude them. ■

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Swallow this tablet

Web tablets appear to be having a significant impact on the amount of time many device

owners spend on their other electronic gadgets, according to a Nielsen survey of tablet owners. When asked to quantify the extent to which they used other connected devices since purchasing a tablet, 32% of the respondents who also owned a desktop PC said they used their tethered computers less often and three percent said they no longer use them.

What's more, those survey respondents who also owned a notebook said they either used their laptops less often (30%) or never (two percent) since acquiring a tablet. A weak demand for PCs was the biggest inhibitor of computer market growth in the first three months of 2011, according to Mika Kitagawa,

a principal analyst at Gartner. "With the launch of the iPad 2 in February, more consumers either

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switched to buying an alternative device or simply held back from buying PCs," Kitagawa said.

Gartner Vice President Carolina Milanesi predicted last October that the all-in-one nature of media tablets would result in the cannibalization of other consumer electronics devices such as e-readers, gaming devices, and media players. "Mini-notebooks will suffer from the

strongest cannibalization threat as media-tablet average selling prices drop below \$300 over the next two years," she said. AP

NCERT to launch education channel

RAJIT SENGUPTA
NEW DELHI

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) will launch India's first ever 24x7 educational television channel for children.

While the official launch date of the channel, Gyan Darshan, is fixed for Children's Day (14 November), NCERT plans to start broadcasting the channel on a trial basis from 15 June.

Officials say that even though the programs will be telecasted in English and Hindi initially, the channel will soon begin telecasting shows in Telegu, Marathi, Oriya and other regional languages.

A budget of Rs 6.3 cr has been earmarked for the launch of the channel and another Rs 87 lakh have been kept aside for running it.

Officials say that the idea behind launching the channel is to make the process of education interesting and fun for students.

It will be different from the existing educational programmes, which are

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programmed in a "boring" manner.

The shows will be kept interactive as far as possible.

"Gyan Darshan will have a healthy balance of programs between educational learning and entertainment. It will have shows on English, Social Science, Science and other subjects for students of all age groups and classes. Special shows on career planning will also be telecasted," said an official from NCERT's central institute of educational technology.

The official added, "Each show will be telecasted thrice every day and various government departments such as the film division will contribute in the content building."

The program schedule will also include special interactive shows for parents and teachers for one hour daily.