



# BI-MONTHLY LEGAL NEWS

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*Partners for Law in Development*

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## Updates from the UN

### UN Special Rapporteur on situation of human rights defenders submits report to UNHRC

The UN Special Rapporteur on situation of human rights defenders has submitted his report at the 28<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council. The report summarises the activities of the SR in the reporting period, and also delineates his strategic workplan. In the report the SR also identifies the threats to which defenders of human rights were most exposed. The report finds that those working on economic, social and cultural rights, minority rights, environmental defenders, LGBT rights defenders, women's rights defenders among others were most exposed to threats.

You can read the whole report [here](#).

### UN Security Council rejects resolution for Palestinian statehood

A Palestinian resolution seeking an end to Israeli occupation and recognition of Palestinian statehood was rejected by the 15 member Security Council of the UN. The draft resolution envisioned a one year deadline for negotiations with Israel and full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the West Bank over three years. It also proposed making Palestine a full UN member state within 12 months. By rejecting it, any serious hopes for creating a framework for bringing lasting peace and ending the occupation of the West Bank received a major setback.

Eight members of the Council voted for the resolution, and five abstained, while two states (United States and Australia) rejected it. The resolution required a minimum of nine votes to get adopted.

Source: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=49709#.VQbwMo6Uffi>

### UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education emphasizes the role of the state in education

UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, Kishore Singh, reminded governments that providing basic education to all, which is free and of good quality, is a fundamental right of all human beings, which is the responsibility of governments to fulfil. This essential service must not be left to the private sector, which would limit access to the privileged.

Kishore Singh further stated, "Privatisation in education negatively affects the right to education both as entitlement and as empowerment. Moreover, it depletes public investment in education as an essential public service and can lead to abusive practices." He reiterated the need for governments to spend on basic education for the children in poor and marginalized communities- which is a responsibility the private sector cannot be expected to fulfil.

Source:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15561&LangID=E>

## Second Session on International Negotiations on Post-2015 Development Agenda held in New York

In the run-up to a review of the Millennium Development Goals, the Second Session on International Negotiations on Post-2015 Development Agenda was held in New York in February. These negotiations are being held in order to agree on a framework for the 17 post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, after the MDGs expire.

At the session, several key areas of concern were addressed, including sustainable development, poverty, environment and gender equality. UN experts emphasized the need to place the interests of persons with disabilities on the post-2015 agenda in order to ensure inclusive development for all. This was a group that had remained unacknowledged while setting the Millennium Development Goals earlier.

Source:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15592&LangID=E>

## International Developments

### Asia

#### Malaysian court upholds Anwar Ibrahim ‘sodomy’ conviction

A Malaysian court unanimously upheld a sodomy conviction and a five-year prison sentence for Anwar Ibrahim, the leader of the country’s opposition. Sodomy, even consensual, is illegal and a conviction carries a jail term of up to 20 years. Anwar had also been previously imprisoned for six years after being overthrown as deputy prime minister in 1998 on earlier charges of ‘sodomizing’ his former family driver and abusing his power. He was acquitted in 2004 after the top court quashed that sodomy conviction. In 2008, he was again accused of sodomizing a male aide but was acquitted by the High Court in 2012. However, the Appeals Court overturned the acquittal in March last year and [sentenced him to five years in jail](#). Serious fair trial concerns arose throughout the original trial, including the prosecutors’ unwillingness to provide defense lawyers with access to medical and other evidence against their client. The judgment and sentence has marked a bitter end to a long-running legal battle in Malaysia.

Source: [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/10/world/asia/malaysian-court-upholds-anwar-ibrahim-sodomy-conviction.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/10/world/asia/malaysian-court-upholds-anwar-ibrahim-sodomy-conviction.html?_r=1)

#### Indonesia drops schoolgirls ‘virginity test’ plan after international uproar

Indonesian officials have dropped the ‘good conduct’ regulation that would require female students to pass virginity tests in order to graduate from high school. They apologised after sparking widespread condemnation. The mandatory virginity tests were intended by lawmakers to tackle perceived problems of premarital sex and prostitution. Last year Indonesia also admitted to conducting virginity tests on women seeking to join police or military forces.

These tests are a breach of Article 7 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that prohibits ‘cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment’ and Article 16 of the Convention against

Torture. The World Health Organization, in a [handbook](#) released last year, made it clear that virginity tests have no scientific basis.

Source: <http://www.trust.org/item/20150211131717-ga2cc/?source=hpMostPopular>

## Russian Supreme Court upholds ban on hijabs in schools

Russia's Supreme Court upheld a controversial ban against wearing religious symbols, including hijabs, in school in the republic of Mordovia. The ruling comes in response to a 2014 decree enacted by the government of Mordovia that also forbid schoolgirls from wearing miniskirts, jeans or low-cut tops, or from having visible piercings, dying their hair unnatural colours, or wearing religious attire. The appeal stated that the ban is unfair to certain faiths and infringes their constitutional rights. Mordovia is the second region in Russia to institute a ban on hijabs after Stavropol Krai, which banned the wearing of the head scarf in schools in October, 2012.

Source: <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russian-supreme-court-upholds-ban-on-hijabs-in-schools/515789.html>

## Sri Lanka reinstates former Chief Justice two years after unconstitutional impeachment

The Sri Lankan government has reinstated Shirani Bandaranayake, Sri Lanka's first ever woman judge in the Supreme Court, as the Chief Justice, two years after she was unconstitutionally impeached from her post by the erstwhile dispensation under former president Mahinda Rajapakse.

Shirani Bandaranayake's impeachment was criticized by the international community in 2013, including the UN Human Rights Council which issued a press statement against the impeachment. Her successor, Mohan Peiris, had previously been, among other things, legal advisor to the cabinet, Chairman of the Seylan Bank, Legal Advisor to the Ministry of Defence, and the government spokesperson before the UNHRC to refute allegations of war crimes by the Sri Lankan government.

Shirani Bandaranayake's re-appointment, however, was more in the nature of a formality, as she immediately stepped down to make way for the country's first Tamil Chief Justice, Kanagasabapathy Sripavan.

Source: <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/on-the-removal-of-mohan-pieris-from-the-office-of-chief-justice/>

## UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons visits Malaysia

UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, made an official visit to Malaysia from 23-28 February 2015 to assess trafficking in women, children and men in the country. She was specially invited to Malaysia for this purpose by the government itself. As part of this visit, she spoke with victims of human trafficking themselves to include their voices in the official policy channels. She also met with government bodies and other actors on how to constructively address the problem of trafficking in Malaysia.

She noted that there are two million documented, and an equal number of undocumented migrant workers in Malaysia, who are caught in an endless cycle of debt bondage and vulnerabilities.

Problems faced most commonly include long working hours, breach of contract, high recruitment fee, non-payment of salary, withholding passports, lack of rest days and sexual abuse.

She called upon the government of Malaysia to implement the institutional and legal policies already in place to combat the problem.

Source:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15591&LangID=E>

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50221#.VP7SueaUeNA>

The end-of-mission statement can be found here:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15631&LangID=E>

## Governmental Committee in Nepal recommends legalising same sex marriage

A Governmental Committee formed to investigate the feasibility of same-sex marriage in the country has recommended that government legalise homosexual marriage. The committee led by former secretary of the ministry of health and population Laxmi Raj Pathak, finally submitted its report in February, more than four years after its formation. The report recommends that Nepal follow 'positive international trends towards homosexuality' and extend marriage rights to gay couples and equal protections for the partners and their children. It also advises changes to the criminal and civil code bills tabled in parliament, which include discriminatory provisions against LGBT people.

Source: <http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/nepal-committee-recommends-legalizing-same-sex-marriage100215#sthash.W5KCHMUT.dpuf>

## *Beyond Asia*

### Egyptian trial court acquits 'gay' men charged with 'inciting debauchery'

In a welcome decision, an Egyptian trial court acquitted 26 men charged with 'inciting debauchery' in Cairo. Following a raid at a local bathhouse, these men were arrested and the footage of the same was broadcast on local television.

This case became known throughout Egypt when a television broadcaster 'tipped off' the police and filmed the entire arrest. The broadcaster and the television channel have now been charged with defamation.

Though Egyptian law does not criminalise same-sex sex, adults 'suspected' of engaging in same-sex sexual activity are often arrested on charges of debauchery, immorality or blasphemy. Homosexuality is still, religiously and culturally a taboo in Egypt. In fact, a report by the [Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights \(EIPR\)](#) claims that since the ouster of former president Mohammed Morsi, at least 150 individuals have been arrested on charges of debauchery. Further, gay rights activists have stated that the atmosphere towards homosexuality is worse now than under the Muslim Brotherhood rule of 2012-2013.

Source: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30775967>

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2015/02/23/mona-iraqi-tv-channel-owner-face-court-bathroom-sting/>

## Chile approves bill recognizing civil unions between same sex couples

The Chilean House of Representatives approved a bill recognizing civil unions between same-sex couples. The bill was passed with an 86-23 vote margins and two abstentions. The bill grants legal status to couples without regard to either person's sex or gender. The bill also expands the concept of family by assuring that the legal family status of individuals who enter into civil unions is modified in the Civil Registry, and requiring Family Courts to implement the new processes. Under the bill, children living with co-habiting couples will be considered relatives by affinity and, should the parents of a child become disabled, a family judge has the discretion to grant a civil partner custody of the children, without giving priority to biological family bonds. It also guarantees benefits to the partners, social security, and life-insurance benefits.

The bill is now pending before the President for her signature.

Source: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/29/chile-same-sex-civil-unions-n\\_6569912.html?ir=India](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/29/chile-same-sex-civil-unions-n_6569912.html?ir=India)

Op-ed: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/maria-mercedes-gomez/chile-steps-forward-on-lgbti-rights\\_b\\_6709834.html?ir=India](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/maria-mercedes-gomez/chile-steps-forward-on-lgbti-rights_b_6709834.html?ir=India)

## New UK guidelines requires rape accused to prove consent to investigating authorities

Under the new guidelines on investigating and prosecuting crime in the United Kingdom, men accused of rape will have to convince authorities that the complainant consented to sex. The accused will have to demonstrate how the complainant consented with 'full capacity and freedom to do so'.

The guidelines were introduced in the wake to a footballer serving a two-and-a-half year jail time of a five-year sentence for raping a teenage woman who was 'too drunk to consent'.

The new guidance also covers domestic violence situations and those where 'the complainant may be financially or otherwise dependent on their alleged rapist'. In a society where women are blamed for being raped when they are in a position of not being able to express explicit consent, the guideline comes as a welcome move.

Source: <http://www.independent.ie/world-news/europe/men-must-now-prove-women-said-yes-in-tough-new-uk-rape-rules-30947951.html>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/11375667/Men-must-prove-a-woman-said-Yes-under-tough-new-rape-rules.html>

## Fired breastfeeding mother's review rejected by US Supreme Court

In a regressive decision, the United States Supreme Court, rejected to admit a review filed by a breastfeeding mother against her employer. The review was filed against the trial court order

dismissing her discrimination suit against her employer who pressurised her to resign.

According to the petitioner, when she returned to office after her maternity leave she requested for access to the lactation room. The company nurse however refused to grant her access on the pretext that certain forms needed to be filled which would take three days to process. On approaching her supervisor for help, she was asked to resign.

The court while rejecting the suit found that the aggrieved woman had not fought hard enough to resist the resignation or contest the obstacles she faced with the human resources department. It further held that even if she was forced to resign because she was breastfeeding, it could not have been sex discrimination because men also lactate under certain circumstances.

Source: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/10/ames-vs-nationwide-breastfeeding-discrimination\\_n\\_6653418.html?ir=India](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/10/ames-vs-nationwide-breastfeeding-discrimination_n_6653418.html?ir=India)

<http://www.alternet.org/civil-liberties/supreme-court-lets-stand-ruling-firing-woman-breastfeeding-not-sexist-men-can>

## New Jersey court holds ‘gay conversion’ a consumer fraud

A New Jersey Superior Court judge, in a welcome ruling held that misrepresenting homosexuality as a disorder in marketing conversion therapy services violates the state’s consumer protection laws.

The ruling came in light of a consumer fraud lawsuit filed against a New Jersey based conversion therapy provider under the Consumer Fraud Act (CFA). This is the first time that a US court has found that homosexuality is not a disease or a disorder and that it is fraudulent for conversion therapists to make such a claim. The court held that the therapy provider’s claims are ‘a misrepresentation in violation of the CFA, in advertising or selling conversion therapy services to describe homosexuality, not as being a normal variation of human sexuality, but as being a mental illness, disorder, or equivalent’.

The judgement can be accessed [here](#).

Source: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/judge-gay-conversion-therapy-claims-are-fraud/>

<http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/news/new-jersey-judge-rules-conversion-therapy-group-can-t-claim-homosexuality-is-a-dis>

## Italian High Court rules against marriage rights under constitution for same sex couples

The Italian High Court ruled that same-sex couples would not be entitled to marriage rights under the country’s constitution. The Court though went on to state that same-sex couples had a right to a ‘protective’ law ensuring equal rights to unmarried straight couples.

The ruling came in the case of a couple from Rome who were turned away by a registrar in 2012 when they sought to marry each other. The couple argued that this was discrimination that violated the Italian constitution and the European Charter of Human Rights.

Italian courts, on two prior occasions since 2010 have observed that same-sex couples have partnership rights, but have taken the stand that it is beyond their power to create such a status for them. A civil union legislation is currently pending in the Parliament.

Source: <http://www.washingtonblade.com/2015/02/12/italy-high-court-rejects-sex-marriage/>

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/lesterfeder/italys-top-court-calls-on-legislature-to-recognize-same-sex#.vsy8qjo9L>

## National

### Judgments/ Orders

#### Supreme Court lays down rule of interpretation in cases of dowry deaths

The Supreme Court has interpreted Section 304-B of the Indian Penal Code, which deals with dowry related deaths, to hold that the word ‘shown’ in the provision has to be read up to mean ‘proved’, and ‘deemed’ has to be read down to mean ‘presumed’. It was held that the ‘burden of proof weighs on the husband to dislodge his deemed culpability. This would be the case only when, in terms of Section 304-B, the prosecution has to prove, on a preponderance of probabilities, the following three requirements - i) the death of the woman in abnormal circumstances; ii) within seven years of her marriage; and iii) the death having a ‘live link’ with the cruelty related with the demand of dowry. However, the accused would be subjected to the standard of ‘beyond reasonable doubt’ to prove his innocence, once the above ingredients were proved by the prosecution by a balance of probability.

The Court, in its judgment, paid heed to the importance of ‘presumption of innocence’, a common law corner stone of criminal jurisprudence. However, it also drew a distinction in cases like dowry deaths where societal circumstances compel the legislature to pass harsh laws placing the burden of proof on the accused. It is relevant to remember that the stringent anti dowry laws were passed in the criminal law amendments of 1983 and 1986, when civil society mobilization against dowry deaths was at its peak.

You can read the judgment [here](#).

#### Supreme Court emphasizes the role of government in rehabilitating victims of crimes

In a recent judgment the Supreme Court has reiterated the role of the government in rehabilitating victims of crimes through financial compensation, as provided under Section 357 A of the CrPC. The Court, in addition to the compensation to be paid to the heirs of the deceased victim by the accused, also directed the state to further pay Rs 3 lakhs as compensation in terms of Section 357 A from the funds under the District Legal Services Authority.

The judgment was given in appeal arising out of a conviction under an offence under Section 304-A of the IPC, which deals with death caused by criminal negligence. However, the Court’s restorative thrust would also be relevant in dealing with other injurious crimes including sexual offences under the IPC.



You can read the judgment [here](#).

## Madras High Court rules for recognition of monetary value of unpaid domestic work by women

The Madras High Court has, while increasing the compensation awarded by the State Motor Accidents Claims Tribunal for the death of a 31 year old woman killed in a road accident, stressed upon the need to properly value unpaid domestic work by women. While the Court made observations essentialising the responsibility of the home maker to taking care of the husband and children, it also recognized the neglect and devaluation that voluntary domestic work has to suffer.

The Motor Vehicles Act lays down that the income of a non working spouse should be considered to be one third of the surviving spouse. This formulation completely blindsides the value of domestic work rendered by the woman.

You can read the judgment [here](#).

Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/sunday-times/Homemaker-A-job-without-benefits/articleshow/45927432.cms?>

## Allahabad High Court commutes Surinder Koli's death sentence

The Allahabad High Court has commuted the death sentence awarded to Surinder Koli to imprisonment for life on grounds of inordinate delay and solitary confinement. The Court held the delay of three and a half years in disposing of the mercy petition to be 'unnecessary and unreasonable'. The Court also noted that Koli had been illegally kept in solitary confinement since the beginning of his conviction. The Court observed that the manner in which the execution warrants were issued against Koli violated his right to due process.

The welcome decision of the Court comes in the wake of a recent landmark [judgment](#) of the Supreme Court which decreed that 'inordinate delay' in disposing of a mercy petition would be a ground for commuting a death sentence.

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/nithari-killings-convict-surinder-kolis-death-sentence-commuted-to-life/article6830342.ece>

## Supreme Court applies judicial discretion in reducing sentencing in rape conviction

The Supreme Court has, in a recent judgment, used the pre-2013 amendment proviso to Section 376 of the IPC to reduce the quantum of punishment in a rape case. The proviso to Section 376 (1) provided for judicial discretion in reducing the quantum of punishment in rape cases, but only 'for special and adequate reasons'. However, the 2013 Criminal Amendment removed any scope for judicial discretion, consigning an accused to face the minimum sentence provided upon conviction without regard to special circumstances, if any, that exist. The offence in this particular case took place before 2013, hence the amended law would not have any retrospective effect.

PLD has consistently been of the view that judicial discretion in special circumstances is a cornerstone of sentencing in criminal jurisprudence. Doing away with it completely, as the

Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013, does in the case of sentencing for rape and aggravated rape, will erase the possibility of dealing with different and complex situations with judicial nuance. A person having consensual sex with anyone below 18 years of age will have to face the entire minimum term prescribed, and will be considered, for the purpose of sentencing, at par with someone convicted of raping a person against their will.

Source: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/rapist-can-be-awarded-lesser-punishment-for-special-reasons-supreme-court/>

You can read the judgment [here](#).

## Rajasthan High Court refuses to stay formal education eligibility criteria for Panchayat elections

The Rajasthan High Court has refused to interfere with a new ordinance being brought in by the Rajasthan government, stipulating minimum educational qualifications for candidates to contest for various posts at the Panchayati level. Earlier, the Supreme Court had refused to entertain a petition challenging on the procedural ground that the Rajasthan High Court was the appropriate forum for the challenge.

While the constitutionality of such an ordinance is a matter of debate, it is also important to not lose focus of the fact that access to education in the Indian context is largely mediated by one's location in society. A dalit, a woman or a person from a religious minority is more likely to have no access to education than others. Bringing in such a law would only serve to further disenfranchise those who are already at the margins.

Source: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/no-relief-to-petitioner-challenging-rajasthan-govts-ordinance-on-fixing-educational-qualifications/>

## Supreme Court upholds dismissal from service of man for bigamy

The Supreme Court has upheld the dismissal of a Muslim man on grounds of misconduct. The man had contracted a second marriage during the subsistence of his first marriage, in violation of the UP Government Servant Conduct Rules of 1956. The Supreme Court held that the impugned conduct rules were not violative of Article 25 of the Constitution, which deals with freedom of religion. Relying upon an earlier judgment of the Supreme Court in *Javed v. State of Haryana*, it held that 'polygamy was not integral part of religion and monogamy was reform within the power of the State under Article 25.'

You can read the judgment [here](#).

Op-Ed: <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/three-is-a-crowd/>

## News

### Parliamentary Standing Committee report advocates against amending Juvenile Justice Act to reduce age of culpability

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development submitted its report on the proposed amendments to the Juvenile Justice Act whereby the minimum age for being tried in adult criminal courts was sought to be reduced from 18 years to 16 years. Remarkably, the report has advocated against implementing the amendments, and has sought to argue against adopting a differential treatment for juveniles within the age group of 16 to 18 years.

The proposed amendments had sought to insert a provision in the Juvenile Justice Act whereby a Juvenile Justice Board could transfer a case involving a juvenile between 16 to 18 years of age to a Children's Court, where they would be tried under ordinary criminal law. The report stresses the fact that Children's Courts were set up to try offences against children, and not offences by them. Further, the report submits that trying children between 16 to 18 years of age under adult criminal law would be against the legislative intent and commitment of the Juvenile Justice Act.

Source: <http://scroll.in/article/709738/Child-rights-activists-cheer-as-parliamentary-panel-blocks-move-to-prosecute-juveniles-as-adults>

You can read the entire report [here](#).

### Mumbai University to include 'third gender' as a category in its admission forms

In a progressive step, the Mumbai University has decided to recognize 'third gender' as a category in its admission forms. The step comes after an order from the University Grants Commission (UGC) notifying a 'third gender' category enabling transgendered persons to avail benefits of all scholarship schemes and fellowship programs in higher educational programs. Earlier in 2014, the University of Delhi had created space for transgendered persons in its application forms for post graduate programs.

These positive developments come in the wake of a landmark judgment of the Supreme Court in April 2014, granting legal recognition and protection to the transgendered community. However, while it is important to make institutional spaces like universities more inclusive, simultaneously mechanisms need to be developed to sensitize the university community, as well as to protect transgendered persons from harassment. The Sexual Harassment at the Workplace Act makes no mention of different gender identities and sexual orientation, and as such does not provide transgendered persons with any framework for redressal in case of harassment within the university.

Source: <http://www.mid-day.com/articles/mumbai-university-grants-recognition-to-third-gender-in-application-forms/15990175>

### Law Commission submits report on amending the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act

The Law Commission, in its 252nd report, has recommended amending the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956 to provide for the maintenance of the wife in case the husband is

incapacitated and unable to maintain her. The proposed amendment to Section 18 of the Act provides for the wife's maintenance from the husband's joint family if, due to physical disability, mental disorder, disappearance or renunciation, the husband cannot maintain her.

You can read the entire report [here](#).

Source: <http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/9-out-of-10-rapists-are-known-to-victims-delhi-police/>

## Maharashtra government to appoint protection officers in all talukas

The Maharashtra government has begun the process of appointing protection officers in all 358 of its talukas to deal with cases registered under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005. Rs 12.69 crores has been sanctioned by the finance department to start off the process. Until now, the Child Development Project Officers were handling the additional responsibility of handling domestic violence cases in the talukas.

Protection Officers are outreach officers of the courts who can help women in making complaints, filing an application before the magistrate for orders, helping her in getting support, medical aid and counseling.

Source: <http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/state-to-finally-appoint-protection-officers-in-talukas/>

## RESOURCES

### ‘The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action turns 20: A Summary Report’- UN Women

This report is a summary of the UN Secretary General’s report of the 20 year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action the outcomes of the 23<sup>rd</sup> special session of the General Assembly. The report looks at national level implementation of the Platform for Action, examining several indices including poverty, health, armed conflict, media and environment. The report looks at the lessons learnt over the 20 years, and priorities for accelerating the implementation of the Platform for Action. The full report of the Secretary General (E/CN.6/2015/3) can be accessed [here](#).

The summary report can be accessed [here](#).

### ‘Gender Mainstreaming in Development Programming’- UN Women

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action made gender mainstreaming a mandatory strategy for approaching gender equality. This publication examines the current development context in the context of gender mainstreaming, and looks at how to implement gender mainstreaming at the country level. It also highlights the importance of continuing to innovate in mainstreaming gender issues in all sectors, including sexual and reproductive health, HIV, environment and the economy.

You can read the report [here](#).

## ‘People’s Archive of Rural India’ - The CounterMedia Trust

The People’s Archive of Rural India (PARI) is an online journal and database founded by veteran rural journalist P. Sainath, dedicated to both hosting and generating reports, stories, photography, videos and audios of rural India. The website is free access, and anyone can contribute content. The online resource has several categories of content, including health, women, adivasis, dalits, environment.

You can access PARI [here](#).

## OBITUARY

### Rajni Kothari passes away

Pre-eminent political theorist and activist Rajni Kothari passed away at the age of 86. One of the biggest contributors to Indian political thought and theory, he was also a tireless fighter for civil liberties and against caste oppression. His activism informed his political thinking, as is reflected in his book *State against Democracy*, written in the aftermath of the Emergency, which he vocally criticized. He was involved in writing the manifesto of the Janata Party in 1977, and was also one of the founders of People’s Union for Civil Liberties. He was one of the writers of a ground breaking report in the aftermath of the anti-Sikh riots of 1983. He also founded the Centre for Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in 1963, a pioneering research institute in politics and society. He was also the founder of Lokayan, a forum for interaction for activists, intellectuals and academics.

His contribution to the corpus of modern Indian political thought is invaluable. His book, *Politics in India* remains a classic and an essential for any student of political thought in India. He also played an immense role in bringing the question of caste into the centre of modern Indian political thought. His seminal book, *Caste in Indian Politics*, examined the centrality of caste and caste movements in Indian politics. Rajni Kothari will be remembered for his pioneering and critical insights into the nature of Indian politics and democracy.

Source: <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/political-scientist-of-india/>