

GENDER SKEW IN POCSO ACT ON ITS WAY OUT

Now, death penalty for those who sexually assault boys under 12

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THE Union Cabinet on Friday approved amendments to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 to make way for the provision of death penalty even for those who sexually assault boys under 12.

Till now, such crimes committed against boys carried a lighter punishment as compared to those against girls.

The quantum of punishment for several other offences was also increased, and strict punishments were introduced for crimes such as injecting hormones to make children attain sexual maturity, circulating child pornography, and assaulting minors during riots or natural disasters.

The Cabinet approved changes to Section 6 of the POCSO Act, which deals with punishments for aggravated penetrative sexual assault, enhancing the punishment of 10 years to life imprisonment and 20 years to imprisonment for remainder of a person's natural life or with death.

Following the outrage over gangrapes of minors in Kathua and Unnao, the Centre had brought an Ordinance to make

Gaganyaan to launch by 2022

The government has cleared the Gaganyaan project under which a manned mission will be sent to space at a cost of ₹10,000 crore. Revealing the details of the proposal cleared by the Cabinet, Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said a three-member crew would be catapulted into low-earth orbit for up to seven days. The testing phase is expected to begin from December 2020 and the mission would be undertaken from 2022, he said. India has already inked agreements with Russia and France for assistance in the Gaganyaan mission, which was first announced by PM Narendra Modi in his I-Day speech **P9**



Coastal regulation notification

The Union Cabinet approved the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2018. The emphasis of the new CRZ norms is on promotion of tourism facilities, quicker dispensation of defence and strategic projects

provision of death penalty for rapists of children under 12, in April and followed it by passing a Bill. The Bill was introduced to amend the Indian Penal Code to provide death for gangrape of a girl less than 12 years, and 20 years in jail to death penalty for rape of a girl under 12 years, among others.

Provisions were also added to provide imprisonment for the rest of one's natural life for

gangrape of a girl under 16 years, while rape of a girl in the same age bracket would be punishable with jail of 20 years up to life imprisonment.

However, the absence of changes to POCSO Act, which is gender neutral and deals with sexual crimes against both girls and boys, meant that similar crimes committed against boys carried lighter punishment.