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11:00 AM | BY - PRESHIKA MA'AM



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Important words used in editorial

Distrust : Suspicion, mistrust, doubt, skepticism, wariness.

Trenchant : Incisive, sharp, cutting, effective

Fixate : Obsess, focus, dwell, preoccupy, concentrate.

Paradigm : Model, pattern, framework, prototype, standard

Restoration : **Renovation, revival, repair, rehabilitation, renewal.**

Prompt : **Trigger, incite, spur, encourage, provoke.**

Swift : **Fast, quick, rapid, prompt, immediate.**

Elusive : **Hard to find, evasive, intangible, indefinable.**

agile

quick
nimble

Evade : **Avoid, dodge, elude, escape, shirk.**

Stigma : **Disgrace, shame, dishonor, brand, mark.**

Acquittal : **Absolution, clearance, exoneration, discharge, dismissal.**

Deterrent : **Disincentive, discouragement, curb, warning, check.**

Flee : **Escape, run away, bolt, abscond, depart.**

Perceive : **Observe, notice, discern, interpret, view.**

Perpetrator: **Offender, criminal, culprit, wrongdoer, attacker.**

Recidivism : Reoffending, relapsing into crime.

Conducive : Favorable, helpful, beneficial, promote.

Victimisation : Unfair treatment, oppression, persecution.

Important idioms and phrases used in the editorial

Lead to (phrasal verb) :

To cause or result in something.

Tend to (phrasal verb) :

To be likely to do something or to happen in a particular way.

Series of gaps: on underreporting of child sexual abuse) Distrust of police has led to underreporting of child sexual abuse) Child sexual abuse in India remains persistently under-reported and the state response to it has shown up trenchant systemic inefficiencies. In over 90% of cases, including the recent Sular case in Coimbatore in which a charge sheet was filed last week, the threat to a child is from within the family's trusted circles. Public imagination often fixates on predatory strangers, which is not conducive to helping families and communities identify a risk in time. Migrant and working-class communities are especially at risk as they are less integrated in local protective social networks. Second, abandoned industrial sites and poorly maintained common land tend to become crime scenes. But despite the 'Safe City' project and the recognition of child-friendly urban development paradigms, urban redesign still focuses on core areas of major metros.

The social safety dimensions of urban wetland restoration, like that of the Noyyal river, are often overlooked as well. Next, while POCSO trials are required to conclude within a year of the special court taking cognisance, POCSO courts face an 89% pendency rate and conviction rates have historically ranged between 3% and 30%, undermining confidence in the police and judiciary. The Sular case prompted promises of swift action, but this is only one case; systemic reforms to protect vulnerable children remain elusive. In 2024, the NCRB recorded 69,191 POCSO cases involving more than 70,000 child victims.

Public distrust discourages residents from reporting suspicions and encourages families fearing police apathy to search for missing children themselves, potentially allowing the perpetrators to hide evidence or flee. Ultimately, when the state fails to deliver due punishment, the people perceive the police to be a bureaucratic hurdle, leaving children more vulnerable.

Repeatedly strengthening penalties merely suppresses reporting in most cases where the offender is familiar. Even the 2018 and 2019 amendments to the POCSO Act reacted to public outrage rather than considered evidence and focused on harsher punishments. Both comprehensive longitudinal data on recidivism and analyses of whether harsher legal penalties are effective deterrents remain scarce. While data collection has improved, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has noted that qualitative analyses of acquittals rarely inform policy changes.

Finally, survivors and families face secondary victimisation from insensitive administrative responses and media reports. Together with the lack of policing informed by trauma response and stigma, true safety continues to evade thousands of children leaving them vulnerable to a cycle of unreported and unpunished violence.

1. Which of the following can be inferred from the passage regarding the government's approach to child sexual abuse?
- (a) It has primarily focused on preventive community-based interventions.
 - ☒ (b) It has largely emphasized punitive measures over evidence-based reforms.
 - (c) It has successfully reduced the pendency rate of POCSO cases.
 - (d) It has effectively addressed social stigma through trauma-informed policing.
 - (e) It has prioritized urban safety concerns in migrant communities

2. Which of the following statements is/are true according to the passage?

- I. Most child sexual abuse cases involve offenders known to the victim.
- II. Public distrust of police may result in delayed reporting of crimes.
- III. The Safe City project has comprehensively addressed child safety concerns across urban India.

(a) Only I and II

(b) Only II and III

(c) Only I and III

(d) All I, II and III

(e) None of these

3. The author's criticism of the 2018 and 2019 amendments to the POCSO Act is primarily based on the argument that:
- (a) They reduced the legal protection available to children.
 - (b) They were implemented without adequate judicial consultation.
 - (c) They prioritized harsher punishments despite limited evidence of their deterrent effect.
 - (d) They weakened the role of special courts in handling POCSO cases.
 - (e) They discouraged data collection regarding child abuse.

4. Which of the following, if true, would most weaken the author's argument that harsher penalties alone are insufficient to address child sexual abuse?
- (a) A study finds that survivors often face stigma from society.
 - (b) Conviction rates in POCSO courts remain low despite legislative amendments.
 - ~~(c) Research demonstrates a substantial decline in offences after the introduction of stricter punishments.~~
 - (d) ~~Most offenders continue to be known to the victims.~~
 - (e) ~~Families remain hesitant to approach the police.~~

5. What is the central theme of the passage?

- (a) The need for increasing the number of POCSO courts in India.
- (b) The growing role of urban planning in reducing crime.
- (c) The failure of families to adequately protect children from abuse.
- (d) The persistence of child sexual abuse due to interconnected failures in reporting, policing, justice delivery, and victim support systems.
- (e) The importance of imposing stricter punishments on offenders.

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