

# Centre drafts child protection policy

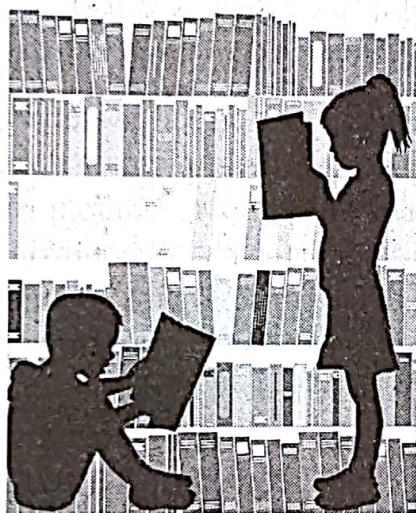
Move comes in the wake of Muzaffarpur home case

**JAGRITI CHANDRA**  
NEW DELHI

A code of conduct for employees of all organisations and a declaration signed by them agreeing to ensure the safety of children are some of the provisions included in the Centre's draft national child protection policy, prepared on the prodding of the Supreme Court in the wake of the Muzaffarpur shelter abuse case.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has placed the draft policy on its website and invited comments from stakeholders until January 4. This will be the first policy dedicated to the protection of children, an area that until now was only a part of the broader National Child Policy, 2013.

The Supreme Court had earlier directed the CBI to investigate allegations involving 17 shelter homes for children, destitute women, beggars and senior citizens in Bihar following the case of sexual abuse of more than 30 girls in a shelter home in Muzaffarpur in the State. The Supreme Court had also asked the Centre to consider framing a national policy on



The policy will apply to all organisations, both public and private. ■ GETTY IMAGES

protection of children.

As per the draft, the policy will apply to "all institutions, and organisations (including corporate and media houses), government or private sector".

The draft policy recommends that all organisations must have a code of conduct based on "zero tolerance of child abuse and exploitation". It requires organisations to lay down that employees don't use language or behaviour that is "inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate".

Institutions should also

designate a staff member to ensure that procedures are in place to ensure the protection of children as well as to report any abuse. Any individual who suspects physical, sexual or emotional abuse must report it to the helpline number 1098, police or a child welfare committee.

## Role of States

Unlike the National Child Policy, 2013, the latest document doesn't talk about children who may need special protection: including those affected by migration, communal or sectarian violence, children forced into begging or in conflict with the law, and those infected with HIV/AIDS. It also doesn't talk about the role of the State for ensuring the protection of child rights or addressing local grievances.

"We welcome the decision, but its subsequent versions will need to go into a greater detail," said Priti Mahara, Director (Policy, Advocacy and Research) CRY. "It needs to define what child protection is as well as what it means by institutions or organisations."