

Special courts to try crimes against kids

# Child rights on Dispur agenda

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Guwahati, Aug. 29: Assam has become the second state in the country after Goa to notify setting up of special courts to fast-track cases relating to child rights and sexual offences.

Assam social welfare department deputy secretary Kavyashree Mahanta told **The Telegraph** today that the state legal affairs department had already issued a notification for setting up the special courts in all district and sessions judge courts. "These courts will exclusively handle cases relating to crimes against children, including sexual offences, in accordance with provisions of the Protection of Children against Sexual Offences Act, 2012," she said.

The Centre had earlier asked all states to set up special courts for dealing with cases relating to children but only Goa has implemented the order so far. Sources said Dispur speeded up the process for setting up the special courts after Assam topped the charts in National Crime Records Bureau's latest report, with 84.65 per cent crime recorded against children. The Assam State Commission for Protection of Children's Rights also lobbied for setting up of the special courts.

The state government has joined hands with the National Law University and Judicial Academy, Assam, here to work out modalities on how these courts would function.

"These courts will provide

### HANDLE WITH CARE

**How to handle child victims of sexual abuse**

*According to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012:*

- No child should be detained in the police station at night for any reason
- Police officer should not be in uniform while recording the statement of the child
- The statement should be recorded as spoken by the child
- Assistance of an interpreter, translator or expert should be taken according to the need of the child

**Cases of child abuse in Assam**

Year	Cases
2005	11
2009-10	152
2011-12	108

Source: NCRB statistics

a child-friendly environment for trial of cases related to crime against children. Such courts are very necessary in Assam in view of the increasing cases of child trafficking, child labour, sexual abuse, child marriage and other child rights violations. These courts will be supervised by the high court. We are hoping that the special courts will start functioning by the end of this year," National Law University associate professor Benerji Chakka, who is associated with project, said today.

The university is working out guidelines for training public prosecutors, police officials and others associated with the trial process. "We have to train people on how to

talk with the child victims of crime or sexual abuse. A child victim is already traumatised and, hence, should be handled very carefully," Chakka said.

Many children from the Northeast, including Assam, have been rescued from homes run in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. They were reportedly taken out of the region with the promise of good education and care but were later found living in inhuman conditions.

There were also reports of many minor girls being sexually abused in Assam. According to a study conducted in 13 states in 2007 by Union ministry of women and children, Assam reported 142 cases of sexual abuse of minors.