

ANI News

## **Women have made it big across sectors solely on merit: Solicitor General Tushar Mehta**

<https://www.aninews.in/news/national/general-news/women-have-made-it-big-across-sectors-solely-on-merit-solicitor-general-tushar-mehta20240309163453/>

New Delhi [India], March 9 (ANI): Tushar Mehta, the Solicitor General of India on Saturday said that at a time when there is a greater focus on gender equality across sectors in the country, several women have excelled across sectors including the legal profession and there are many eminent professionals who have made it big solely on the back of their merit.

Speaking at a programme 'Celebrating Women in the Legal Fraternity and their remarkable journey' organized by the Society of Indian Law Firms Ladies Group (SLG), the Solicitor General said that historically there has been a wrong notion being spread that women are a weaker sex and they were the legislative obstructions in participation of women in the legal profession in the pre-independence era, which have hampered their growth and participation in profession. Urging people to refrain from tokenism, Mehta said, "Based solely on merit, solely on their competence ladies have prospered, professionally, financially, socially, culturally, politically, in every which way."

"You don't need tokenism, you deserve what you deserve. There is a discussion, some percentage to be kept for the ladies in the judiciary, but that is not an honour being conferred upon the ladies," he said.

Speaking on the system of administration of justice, Dr Lalit Bhasin, President of the Society of Indian Law Firms, noted that 35 per cent of the subordinate judges are women and in the case of High Courts, it is 13 per cent and in the Supreme Court there are only three women judges.

Calling for greater participation of women, Dr Bhasin said "As per figures of 2022, 12 per cent of women are in the constabulary level and the number declines to 8 per cent at the officer level. In prison administration only 14 per cent are women and they are all stuck in the lower ranks. In the High Courts in seven decades there have been only 16 women chief justices."

"In all these years of existence the National Human Rights Commission which should be a shining example of fairness including gender justice, there has been no woman commissioner at all. These need to be addressed," he added.

Further, pitching for greater diversity, at the program organized by SILF, Shweta Bharti, Managing Partner, Hammurabi and Solomon Partners said that gender equality and diversity also bring about economics and business case. Diverse teams are considered to be better decision-makers. In one of the studies, it was found that diverse teams have a 60 per cent improvement in decision-making.

"Gender-diverse teams outperformed individual decision-makers in most cases.

Teams that are diverse in geography, gender and age make better decisions and diversity also improves the performance of individuals," Bharti added. The day-long event organized on the occasion of International Women's Day, also had sessions on 'Setbacks and Strides: Journey Ahead' with panelists including Justice Mini Pushkarna, Judge, High Court of Delhi, Priya Hingorani, Senior Advocate, among others. The other sessions featured panel discussions on 'Emerging Challenges for Women in Law: Has Gender Lost its Relevance' and 'Court to Board: Women's Participation in Decision Making'. (ANI)

The New Indian Express

## **Women have made it big across sectors solely on merit: Solicitor General of India**

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<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2024/Mar/09/women-have-made-it-big-across-sectors-solely-on-merit-solicitor-general-of-india>

NEW DELHI: At a time when there is greater focus on gender equality across sectors is in the country, several women have excelled across sectors including the legal profession and there are many eminent professionals who have made it big solely on the back of their merit, Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta said on Saturday.

Speaking at a programme 'Celebrating the Women in the Legal Fraternity and their Remarkable Journey' organized by Society of Indian Law Firms Ladies Group (SLG), the Solicitor General said that historically there has been a wrong notion that women are a weaker sex. It has posed as an obstruction in the participation of women in the legal profession.

Urging people to refrain from tokenism, Mehta said: "Based solely on merit, solely on their competence, ladies have prospered, professionally, financially, socially, culturally, politically, in every which way."

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Calling for greater participation of women, Dr. Bhasin said: "As per figures of 2022, 12% women are in the constabulary level and the number declines to 8% at the officer level. In prison administration only 14% are women and they are all stuck in the lower ranks. In the High Courts, in seven decades there have been only 16 women chief justices."

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She added that gender diverse teams outperformed individual decision makers in most cases. Teams which are diverse in geography, gender and age made better decisions and diversity also improves performance of individuals, Ms. Bharti added.

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barandbench.com

## **Tokenism to increase number of women in judiciary against their interests in the long run: SG Tushar Mehta**

He said that women are competent to succeed in legal profession even without any token measures and many women who made the cut did so not because they were women but despite being women.

<https://www.barandbench.com/news/how-will-country-progress-people-fight-amongst-themselves-cji-dy-chandrachud>

Token measures to promote women in the legal profession and increase their representation at the bar and the judiciary would go against their interests in the long run, Solicitor General (SG) Tushar Mehta said on Saturday.

SG Mehta, however, said that professional positions are different from elective offices as there is a need for special seats to be reserved to ensure leadership roles for women.

He stated that women are competent to succeed in legal profession even without any token measures and many women who made the cut did so not because they were women but despite being women.

"Are all of you successful because or despite being ladies? This tokenism in the long run would be against the interest of ladies itself. Justice Sujata Manohar is great not because of being a lady. I would appeal to all to not go for tokenism. You will get what you deserve. Designating certain seats in judiciary will be an insult. Ladies are competent," he said.

He further said that viewing women as mere statistics might not be the correct approach and highlighted the case of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who is remembered as one of the most powerful PMs the country has had.

"Success of any man or woman cannot be judged by statistical figures. It is often cited nowadays (that there are) so few numbers of lawyers, judges. Do we just want statistics? If you look at our history of powerful Prime Ministers, starting from Jawaharlal Nehru, and Indira Gandhi, for us one was enough. Do we need to say 33 per cent Prime Ministers are women, or is it needed in the judiciary as tokenism and in legislature. It is insulting to the ladies to count success in statistics," he said.

The SG was speaking at an event organised by the Ladies Group of Society of Indian Law Firms (SILF) to commemorate International Women's Day 2024.

"Women are already ahead of men, wanting to move ahead with ambition was frowned upon but India has always worshipped the lady. Only in India the most powerful also bow before a female deity. There is a superiority as far as women are concerned," he said.

He concluded by saying that women are the superior and stronger sex and only the weak and mischievous among men state otherwise.

"I think the movement of equality should start from and by men," he said.

SILF president Dr. Lalit Bhasin in his address bemoaned the lack of women in key positions and institutions.

"In all these years of existence the National Human Rights Commission which should be a shining example of fairness including gender justice, there has been no woman commissioner at all. These need to be addressed," he stressed.

Shweta Bharti, Managing Partner at Hammurabi & Solomon Partners, stated that the challenges for women in the legal profession still persist.

"Gender equality and diversity also brings about economics and business case. Diverse teams are considered to be better decision makers. In one of the studies, it was found that diverse teams have a 60% improvement in decision making."

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## **Dafai Village's Journey of Despair and Hope**

<https://www.thenewlearn.com/dafai-villages-journey-of-despair-and-hope/>

As we moved away from the starting point of the Bundelkhand Expressway and a famous pilgrimage site into a side-road, the hills of Chirakut here appeared to be more and more isolated. Another turn, and we appeared to have reached almost a dead-end. However it is here that over 80 households of the Kol tribal community have been living for a long time.

This is Dafai hamlet located in Karvi block of Chitrakut district (UP). This settlement was formed several decades back when some dominant feudal persons were keen to have many workers at their beck and call all the time, particularly as they were interested in large-scale, highly lucrative stone quarries and it was important to get pliable workers nearby for the hazardous stone crushing work.

Those Kol families who were in vulnerable conditions in places like Manikpur were encouraged by them to settle in some vacant land and this is how the Dafai hamlet was settled.

When I first visited this hamlet about five years back I learnt that they had no farmland, and even their housing land on which their small mud houses stood was not secure as feudal persons still claimed this as their own, and to maintain this status they tried their best to keep these families away from government benefits which could have brought some recognition of people's rights as residents of this hamlets.

Hence I learnt that most of the people living here did not have ration cards and job cards, and nearly 90% of the children here did not go to school then. This settlement did not have any electricity connection. The only source of water supply was a hand pump and if this did not work they had to get go far for fetching water. There were no toilets in the village and women in particular were very troubled by having to go to a distant hill in unsafe conditions. Working conditions in stone crushing units were very harmful for health. So bad was the situation in fact that we had to rush to provide immediate some relief for cold wave conditions.

Later at my home in Delhi I got news of further trouble, serious trouble here. Taking advantage of the further vulnerability of women workers in crushing units during COVID times, some of their employers started subjecting them to sexual exploitation. The leading voluntary organization trying to help them—Vidyadham Samiti—obviously tried to check this. As a result the silence was broken and news of this violence against women appeared in some media outlets, local and national. Instead of rushing to check this, the police instead responded initially by victimizing and badly humiliating the chief functionary of Vidyadham Samiti—Raja Bhaiya, an activist known widely for his firm commitment to the rights of the most vulnerable communities. He was taken to the police station, treated very badly, abused and threatened of much worse to come.

All sorts of pressures were exerted on the people and in particular the women of Dafai to implicate him in some false case but the people resisted all pressures and refused to say anything false against the man they stated had tried to help them most sincerely (Vidyadham Samiti had also been involved in distributing relief far and wide during COVID times).

Meanwhile an appeal to the National Human Rights Commission resulted in the police official involved in the harassment of Raja Bhaiya being fined Rs. 50,000, and this amount being used to provide compensatory payment to Raja Bhaiya.

This turn of events allowed Vidyadham Samiti to again devote itself to getting justice for the people of Dafai. Meanwhile this distant hamlet had come so much into focus that the administration selected this hamlet for a concentration of several of its development schemes.

Job cards and ration card were made. Tap connections were provided under the ongoing scheme although water is still to reach these taps. Above all, in a rare decision, almost all the households here were selected under the PM Awas scheme for new house construction. In the case of nearly 70% of them these houses have been constructed or are nearing completion. However as the amount given is not adequate people also had to borrow money to get houses constructed from private moneylenders on high interest rate and now they are compelled to pay back around Rs. 800 or more to these moneylenders per week for about two years or so.

At the same time most of them have lost work at crushers due to mechanization or other factors. Now they have become more dependent on going to brick-kilns as migrant workers. Women here said what they want is some work they can do within or close to their village. However NREGA work is provided very rarely and then too wage payments are too delayed.

Despite the recent increase of development work, no toilets have been constructed yet. No electricity connections have been given yet.

One source of new confidence among villagers is that as the government has helped to construct houses here their stay here has become more secure with housing rights. Although some feudal persons still threaten that one day you will have to leave, but on the whole now they feel more secure.

Hence this village has been on a journey of despair as well as new hope in recent years and needs more support to strengthen its gains.

Bharat Dogra is Honorary Convener, Campaign to Save Earth Now. His recent books include Protecting Earth for Children, When the Two Streams Met and A Day in 2071.



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## **NGOs Call for Action to Safeguard Children's Rights**

<https://www.chennaionline.com/news/ngos-call-for-action-to-safeguard-childrens-rights/>

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Representatives of various NGOs have appealed to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to take decisive steps in preventing the abuse of children residing in childcare homes across Andhra Pradesh. During a recent meeting conducted by NHRC Chairperson Justice Arun Mishra and other members, concerns were raised regarding the mistreatment of minors in Child Care Institutions (CCIs) and incidents of trafficking.

NGOs emphasized the urgency of addressing these violations and highlighted specific cases to Justice Arun Mishra. Additionally, organizations like the Kulavivaksha Vyatireka Porata Sangham (KVPS) urged the NHRC to ensure the formation of a full bench of the Andhra Pradesh State Human Rights Commission (APSHRC) to safeguard human rights in the state.