

Over 2,000 juveniles languish in adult jails

By **Ayesha Arvind** In New Delhi

IN A shocking revelation, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has submitted before the Delhi High Court that over 2,600 juveniles are currently languishing in adult jails across Delhi, in clear violation of the Juvenile Justice Act.

In an affidavit submitted before the high court on Tuesday, the NCPCR has stated that during several jail visits and surprise checks, conducted between March 2012 and March 2014, it identified "about 2,673 probable juveniles who are languishing in jails of Delhi."

The Commission has also told the court that the Delhi jail figures are indicative of the fact that there may be "thousands of such juvenile inmates incarcerated in different jails of the country.

NCPCR's affidavit follows the directions of the Delhi High Court whereby, in May last year, it had issued guidelines to "prevent incarceration of children in conflict with law, or their subjection to the Adult Criminal Justice System."

In October that year, NCPCR constituted a 'jail visit panel' that has been conducting monthly jail visits since then besides interviewing inmates, checking their records etc. and compiling a report of the same.

Earlier this year, the Commission also forwarded a list of cases of people who appear to be juvenile to the Delhi Legal Services Authority. An age inquiry with respect to these matters was then taken up by JJB which declared 162 people to be juvenile.

In its report to the Court, NCPCR has now said that the above issue of juvenility and adulthood will "remain contentious till a foolproof mechanism is evolved to ensure that the age verification of inmates is done prior to their admission in any jail across

NCPCR panel visited Delhi jails after HC order

the country." It has now suggested a series of steps to address this problem and requested the high court to pass necessary orders. The high Court is hearing a letter petition filed by advocate Anant Asthana and Bharti Ali from HAQ, an NGO.

In its latest order, the HC directed the Delhi government to furnish details on the functioning of its visitors' board in each jail that is supposed to monitor the inmates in jails and red flag shortcomings. The Court is likely to take up the matter for hearing on Wednesday.

