

# NCPCCR opposes Maneka's juvenile rapist stand

TEENA THACKER  
NEW DELHI, JULY 14

Union women and child development (WCD) minister Maneka Gandhi's stand that juveniles who commit rape should be tried as adults has evoked opposition from its own child rights body, as National Commission of Protection of Child Rights (NCPCCR) chairperson Kushal Singh said the proposal is against the basic rights of children.

Ms Gandhi has said on Sunday that the ministry is proposing changes in the Juvenile Justice Act and that she is "personally working on it to bring 16-year-olds into the purview. According to the police, 50 per cent of the crimes are committed by 16-year-olds who know the Juvenile Justice Act." She added that juveniles accused of crimes like rape should be treated like adults.

Former WCD minister Krishna Tirath had also

**● We must focus on the needs of the children. They need care instead of punitive action.**

**— Kushal Singh**  
NCPCCR chief

proposed for the same changes. However, following stiff opposition from child rights activists, it could not be done. On

Monday, too, child rights activists and NCPCCR came out in open opposition to the move, contending that it was against child rights.

NCPCCR chairperson Kushal Singh, who has already sent commission's comments to the ministry, said changing the law and punishment was not a solution. "Right from the beginning we have held that lowering the age of the juvenile regardless of the crime committed goes against the basic philoso-

phy of Juvenile Justice Act. We have reiterated the same in our comments to the ministry. We feel that we must focus on the needs of the children. They need care instead of punitive action. Putting them in the schools from streets is the responsibility of the society and the government and we must work on that. Just because of few abrasions we paint all the children with the same brush," she told this newspaper.

