

## FEATURE

### Sonologists, radiologists and gynaecologists in India on strike, 15 April 2015



Indian Medical Association strike against PCPNDT Act in Faridabad: "Save the daughter, save the doctors"  
<http://haryanaabtak.com/tag/indian-medical-association-strike-against-pcpndt-act-in-faridabad/>

In response to the call from the Indian Medical Association (IMA) headquarters at New Delhi for a one-day strike of all sonology clinics, the sonologists kept their establishments closed in the city and the region on 15th April.

The **Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994** is an Act of Parliament intended to stop prenatal sex determination that leads to abortion of female fetuses and stop the decline in the sex ratio in India. The Act banned prenatal sex determination (not sex selection). Offences under the Act include: conducting or helping in the conduct of prenatal diagnostic technique in an unregistered unit; sex selection for a man or woman; conducting a prenatal diagnostic test for any purpose other than those mentioned in the Act; sale, distribution, supply, renting etc. of any ultrasound machine or any other equipment capable of detecting the sex of the fetus.

Doctors say that they are most definitely not against punishment for sex determination, but are simply protesting because the government machinery is more interested in punishing clerical errors, probably because they are easier to detect.

A striking imbalance in the child sex ratio and rampant female feticide is what gave birth to the PCPNDT Act. But, the implementation of the Act seems to be focusing on bookkeeping errors on the part of sonographers, which are minor in comparison to the urgent need to address the social problem itself. They say the Act needs to be amended to re-focus on the main issue.

**SOURCE:** <http://www.dailyrounds.org/blog/protecting-doctors-or-putting-them-behind-bars-here-is-why-doctors-are-up-against-pcpndt-act/>

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The IMA president at Nagpur, Dr Ajay Kate, said that sonologists as well the entire medical fraternity was against sex determination and, over a period of time, have supported the cause. However, "officials have been unnecessarily harassing the doctors for even small mistakes in the monthly information form submitted to them," he said. "The doctors are put to task for simple clerical mistakes..." In fact, the authorities started sealing the machines and registering criminal offences which had got no relation to actual sex determination.

**SOURCE:** <http://www.nyoooz.com/nagpur/87529/sonologists-strike-work-against-draconian-act-in-nagpur#>

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Doctors in the city refused to conduct sonographies on pregnant women on Wednesday. They claimed that the government was taking a harsh stand against their fraternity by jailing medicos under the pre-conception and pre-natal diagnostics (PCPNDT) act, which works against female foeticide and illegal abortions in the state. Close to 25,000 sonographies related to pregnancy occur in Mumbai every day. The Indian Sonologists and Gynaecologists Association declared a one-day protest across the country. More than 6,000 doctors across 30 districts of Maharashtra participated in the protest, with about 500 doctors from Mumbai gathering at Azad Maidan to register their protest.

Last month, eight doctors from Pune were jailed for one year for not maintaining proper paper work under Form F of the PCPNDT Act. "The state and city vigilance committees look for minor mistakes in Form F, like not putting mobile numbers, or any other lack of details, and seal the machine. We have to go to the court to reverse the order, but the case takes up to 2–3 years to resolve," said Dr Sharad Malvadkar, a radiologist and member of the association.

Dr Ashwini Bhalerao-Gandhi, gynaecologist at PD Hinduja Hospital in Mahim said: "The law has to be amended as soon as possible. Doctors cannot keep suffering and going into jail like this."

**SOURCE:** <http://www.dnaindia.com/mumbai/report-nationwide-protest-against-pcpndt-provisions-2077876>

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Radiologists from the Nashik Radiologists & Imaging Society said the Act had become "draconian" for all practising sonologists and radiologists and had become a tool for harassment in the hands of the authorities implementing it. They said the 300 radiology centres in the district and the 120 radiologists in the Society had all observed the strike.

The Association sought help from the authorities concerned to effect necessary amendments to the Act and "save the doctors". NRIA president Lalesh Nahata said, "We are in favour of the law. The purpose of it is to save the girl child. We want it to be an open thing where the sex of the child is disclosed and the government should keep a check and save the girl child. Only then can they keep a check on the malpractices.

**SOURCE:** <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nashik/Radiologists-on-day-long-strike-demand-changes-in-PCPNDT-Act/articleshow/46939651.cms>

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Members of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) will wear black badges countrywide and not do any ultrasound tomorrow. The IMA wants changes in the PCPNDT Act. The members allege that unfair cases were being registered against scan centres by the Health Department under the PCPNDT Act.

Dr SPS Sooch, state president, said doctors using ultrasound machines for the purpose other than pelvic examination such as cardiologists and sonologists should be out of the purview of the PCPNDT Act.

Dr Ajit Singh Chawla, president of the IMA, Ludhiana, said skewed sex ratio was a cause of concern for all sections of society. In spite of the PCPNDT Act in force for more than two decades and its strict implementation, there is no significant change in the sex ratio. The ultrasound technology is an excellent diagnostic tool for medical fraternity. But unfortunately, the machine has become a source of harassment for doctors, said Dr Chawla.

**SOURCE:** <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/ludhiana/community/ima-members-to-wear-black-badges-today/67540.html>

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**The various demands put forward, some of which are as draconian as the ones the medical professionals were complaining of, included:**

- Ultrasound machines should not come under the purview of the PCPNDT Act, as it is a basic requirement nowadays.
- For any violation of the PCPNDT Act, the punishment should be graded.
- Parents and family members who are actually involved in female feticide and infanticide should be booked and punished under the law for murder.
- The Act has failed to yield any result for the past two decades. So, the actual reasons for deteriorating sex ratio should be analysed and corrective action taken .
  - i) Female infanticide is one important factor.
  - ii) High mortality rate of female child in the first five years because of poor nutrition, neglect by parents and preference to male child over female by parents.
  - iii) Insecurity of female gender in society due to ineffective implementation of the existing laws by the authorities.
- Every pregnancy should be tracked from conception to delivery.
- Every pregnant woman should be issued a registration number by the Civil Surgeon office. The onus should be on the patient to register her pregnancy before the 10th week. The number should be a must for getting any scan done and should also be made compulsory for obtaining a birth certificate.

**ONE SOURCE:** <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/ludhiana/community/ima-members-to-wear-black-badges-today/67540.html>

*Compiled by Suchitra Dalvie, Asia Safe Abortion Partnership*