

THE TIMES OF INDIA

'Know laws, tackle offenders'

Bedi: Men Who Harass Must Be Stopped

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bangalore: "There are Tejpals in every office. How do you avoid them?" Touche! That was Kiran Bedi at her frankest best.

The retired IPS officer stood on the dais in front of a hall brimming with girls; her hour-long speech on women's empowerment had obviously inspired them. In her hand were chits full of questions from the audience. "Do we need sessions on women empowerment? Instead, shouldn't we have them for sensitization of men?" she read out from one.

Kiran smiled and looked up: "We need both. If I was addressing a group of men here, my words would have been different. I would've told them they have no business misbehaving with women, no business not to share work at home, no business to force women into motherhood early, no business to raise their voices against them. It's a mutual relationship."

She was addressing students at the JP Nagar campus of Jain University's CMS Business School. From handling 'Tejpals' to planning their future, Bedi enlightened the girls on how to move forward in life.

"Empowerment begins with clarity. It is more important for girls than boys to know what they want to become. When I was your age,

'Femininity and strength can go together'

Chethan Shivakumar

In her signature sherwani jacket, Bedi spoke about how she developed the persona she was later admired for. "When I was small, my father held me and said: Life is an incline. You either go up or come down." Excerpts:

Does femininity need to be kept aside in order to be courageous?

Who says femininity and strength don't go together? Femininity is not a weakness. For me, it's about being nice. Is Mary Kom not feminine?

How can we deal with eve-teasing?

The first time it happens, it should be stopped. Ask the perpetrator: 'Mr So-and-so, is this the first and last time you would be doing this, or do I file a sexual harassment complaint against you?'. If it happens a second time, try to record it. Let him know he can't hurt your dignity.

How did you get so much self-confidence?

When I was 12 years old, I knew what I wanted in life. And there was no confusion at home.



RAY OF HOPE: Kiran Bedi interacts with students of Jain University's CMS Business School at JP Nagar on Friday

There was no conflict between my parents and me regarding what I wanted to do. Every day, you have to keep deleting negative thoughts from your mind. There are times when you may lose self-confidence. You should train to control your own thinking for it to bounce back.

How has your journey been with the Aam Aadmi Party?

I have nothing to do with AAP.

We were part of Anna Hazare's movement. They decided to form a political party and we took a different route.

Would you have preferred to be born a boy?

I would have liked to get all the qualities of a boy and still be a woman. When a boy takes the good qualities of a girl and vice-versa, we become better human beings. I have the courage and stamina of a boy and the heart of a woman. **TNN**

I knew I wanted to be a career woman. I wanted to earn all my life," she said.

In her speech, a blend of Hindi and English, Bedi offered the youngsters tips on handling sexual harassment in office. "Every college should give students a small capsule on law training. They should know about the Sexual Harassment Act and Domestic Violence Act. Only then will they know what to do immediately. It is equally important for boys to know them. If the Tejpals know it's a non-bailable offence with a maximum punishment of 10 years, they'll reconsider 10 times before doing anything."

"Someone asked me if we don't cook, who will cook at home. I'm not saying don't cook. But don't do it all the time. Giving in to someone's demands all the time is not the right thing," she said.