

NDA will admit women: govt

Centre informs SC of its decision, to file an affidavit by September 22

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Union government on Wednesday gave the Supreme Court the “good news” that it had taken a decision to allow women entry into the National Defence Academy (NDA), so far a male bastion for recruitment into the armed forces.

If this decision comes through formally on paper, women can prepare for a career in the armed forces immediately after Class 12.

“There is good news. The forces at the highest level and the government has taken a decision last evening to induct girls for permanent commission through the National Defence Academy,” Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati informed a Bench led by Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and M.M. Sundresh.

The Bench asked the government to file an affidavit in this regard by September 22, the next date of hearing. It said the armed forces was a respected institution, but it



In command: Women officers of the Army have brought laurels to the force, the Supreme Court said. ■ FILE PHOTO

had more to do regarding gender equality.

The court admitted that it was not a happy situation for it to constantly nudge the authorities into taking action on bettering gender representation. The Bench said the authorities needed to act by themselves.

The court commended Ms. Bhati for taking pro-active measures in favour of women interested in a career in the armed forces.

Ms. Bhati urged the court for the time being to maintain status quo about the ad-

missions to the NDA in the present academic year. She said the NDA exam, originally scheduled for September 5, had been postponed to November.

“Consider granting status quo for this examination and let it continue, as it will need policy, procedure, training and infrastructure changes,” she submitted. On August 18, the court issued an interim order allowing women candidates to take the NDA exam, which was then scheduled on September 5.

The court had also then

questioned why “co-education is a problem” in the armed forces. It had orally observed that it was “absurd” that women were not allowed to appear for the exam even after the Supreme Court, in a judgment, directed permanent commission for women in the Army.

Feb. 2020 ruling

On February 17 last year, the court upheld permanent commission for women officers. It dismissed the government’s submissions that women were physiologically weaker than men as a “sex stereotype”. It declared that Short Service Commission (SSC) women officers were eligible for permanent commission and command posts in the Army irrespective of their years of service.

“Women officers of the Indian Army have brought laurels to the force... Their track record of service to the nation is beyond reproach,” Justice Chandrachud had observed in a 54-page judgment in the Army case.