

**Bill No. XXVIII of 2024**

THE TRADITIONAL HANDLOOM SILK WEAVERS  
(PROTECTION AND WELFARE) BILL, 2024

A  
BILL

*to provide for the protection of traditional handloom silk weavers in the  
country particularly in Bhagalpur in Bihar and for welfare measures  
including life insurance coverage, healthcare educational  
facilities to the children of such weavers and  
for matters connected therewith or  
incidental thereto.*

BE it enacted by Parliament in the Seventy-fifth Year of the Republic of India as  
follows:—

1. (1) This Act may be called the Traditional Handloom Silk Weavers  
(Protection and Welfare) Act, 2024.

Short title and  
commencement.

- 5 (2) It shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may,  
by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint.

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires:—

(a) "Council" means the National Traditional Handloom Silk  
Weavers Welfare Council constituted under section 4;

Definitions.

- 10 (b) "Fund" means the Traditional Handloom Silk Weavers Welfare  
Fund constituted under section 6;

(c) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this Act; and

(d) "traditional handloom silk weavers" means any person who for at least two generations is engaged in the weaving of handloom silk and whose only source of income is the money he/she earns from weaving and selling such silk products.

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National  
Policy for the  
welfare of  
traditional  
handloom silk  
weavers.

3. The Central Government shall, as soon as may be, but within one year from the commencement of this Act, formulate, in consultation with the Governments of the States having substantial population of traditional handloom silk weavers, a National Policy for the welfare of traditional handloom silk weavers and their families and for the protection of their rights and interests.

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*Explanation.* - For the purposes of this section and sections 4 and 6, the Central Government shall prescribe the percentage of households of traditional handloom silk weavers to the total households in a State for determination of the States having substantial population of such weavers.

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Constitution  
of the  
National  
Traditional  
Handloom  
Silk Weavers  
Welfare  
Council.

4. (1) **The Central Government shall, as soon as may be, by notification in Official Gazette, constitute a Council to be known as the National Traditional Handloom Silk Weavers Welfare Council for carrying out the purposes of this Act.**

(2) **The Council shall consist of—**

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(a) **a Chairperson having adequate knowledge and professional experience in the handloom weaving sector, to be appointed by the Central Government in such manner as may be prescribed;**

(b) **a Vice Chairperson, to be appointed by the Central Government with such qualification and in such manner as may be prescribed;**

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(c) **five Members of Parliament, of whom three shall be from the House of the People and two shall be from the Council of States, to be nominated by the Presiding Officers of the respective Houses;**

(d) **three members to represent the traditional handloom silk weavers across the country to be appointed by the Central Government in such manner as may be prescribed;**

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(e) **four members to represent the Union Ministries of Textiles, Finance, Planning and Labour and Employment, to be appointed by the Central Government in such manner as may be prescribed; and**

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(f) **four members to be nominated by the Government of the States having substantial population of traditional handloom weavers on rotation basis in alphabetical order.**

(3) **The Council shall be a body corporate by the name aforesaid, having perpetual succession and common seal, with power to acquire, hold and dispose of property both movable and immovable and to contract and shall, by the said name, sue or be sued.**

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	(4) The term of office and other conditions of service of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and members of the Council and the procedure to be followed in the discharge of the functions of the Council shall be such as may be prescribed.	
5	<b>(5) The salary and allowances payable to, and other terms and conditions of the service of the Chairperson and non-official members of the Council shall be such as may be prescribed.</b>	
	<b>(6) The headquarter of the Council shall be at Bhagalpur in the State of Bihar.</b>	
10	<b>(7) The Council may establish its offices at such other places, as it may deem necessary for carrying out the purposes of this Act.</b>	
	<b>(8) The Council shall have a Secretariat with such number of officers and members of staff and on such terms and conditions of service as may be prescribed.</b>	
15	<b>5. (1) The Council shall, subject to guidelines issued by the Central Government in this regard, in coordination with the State Governments concerned, take steps for the overall welfare of traditional handloom silk weavers including, removal of poverty and indebtedness, raising the standard of living and ensuring easy availability of raw materials and markets for the sale of the handloom silk products.</b>	Functions of the Council.
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	<b>(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing provisions, the Council shall,—</b>	
25	<b>(a) implement the National Policy for the traditional handloom silk weavers formulated under section 3;</b>	
	<b>(b) maintain records of traditional handloom silk weavers in all villages and districts throughout the country;</b>	
	<b>(c) provide tools and techniques for weaving to the traditional handloom silk weavers;</b>	
30	<b>(d) encourage and provide all necessary assistance to traditional handloom silk weavers cooperatives;</b>	
	<b>(e) organize exhibitions, melas and such other activities to promote traditional handloom silk products in different parts of the country;</b>	
35	<b>(f) make suitable arrangements for the purchase of traditional handloom silk products by Government agencies;</b>	
	<b>(g) encourage export of traditional handloom silk products; and</b>	
	<b>(h) perform such other functions as may be assigned to it by the Central Government from time to time.</b>	
40	<b>6. (1) The Central Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, establish a Fund to be known as the Traditional Handloom Silk Weavers Welfare Fund with a corpus of rupees two thousand crore and thereafter shall contribute to the Fund from time to time after due appropriation made by Parliament by law in this behalf</b>	Establishment of the Traditional Handloom Silk Weavers Welfare Fund.

along with the Governments of the States, having substantial population of traditional handloom silk weavers, in such ratio as may be prescribed.

(2) There shall also be credited to the Fund such other sums as may be received by way of donations, contributions, assistance or otherwise from individuals, body corporates, financial institutions, firms and partnerships. 5

(3) The Fund shall be administered by a Board of Trustees, which shall be constituted by the Central Government in such manner as may be prescribed. 10

(4) The Fund shall be utilized for providing:—

(a) interest free loans to traditional handloom silk weavers for the purchase of raw materials, looms, tools etc;

(b) *ex-gratia* payments at prescribed rates to each of the bereaved families of traditional handloom silk weavers who die in any accident related to weaving; 15

(c) life insurance cover to traditional handloom silk weavers and their families;

(d) healthcare facilities to traditional handloom silk weavers and their dependent family members; 20

(e) financial assistance to traditional handloom silk weavers for the repair of looms and tools;

(f) unemployment allowance during illness or financial crisis during lean periods;

(g) educational facilities and vocational training to the wards of traditional handloom silk weavers; and 25

(h) such other welfare measures as may be prescribed.

Central Government to provide Funds.

7. The Central Government shall, after due appropriation made by Parliament by law in this behalf, provide to the Council such sums as may be considered necessary for the efficient functioning of the Council. 30

Annual Report

8. (1) The Council shall prepare, in such form and manner, as may be prescribed, an annual report giving a true and full account of its activities during the previous year and submit it to the Central Government.

(2) The Central Government shall cause the report submitted to it under sub-section (1) to be laid before each House of Parliament. 35

Power to remove difficulties

9. (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the Central Government may, by order published in the Official Gazette, make such provisions, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, as appear to it to be necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty: 40

Provided that no such order shall be made after the expiry of the period of two years from the date of the commencement of this Act.

(2) Every order made under this section shall, as soon as may be, after it is made, be laid before each House of Parliament.

5       **10.** The provisions of this Act shall be in addition to and not in derogation of any other law for the time being in force regulating any of the matters dealt within this Act.

Act not in  
derogation of  
any other law.

**11.** (1) The Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

Power to make  
rules.

10       (2) Every rule made by the Central Government under this Act shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made, before each House of Parliament, while it is in session, for a total period of thirty days which may be comprised in one session or in two or more successive sessions and if, before the expiry of the session immediately following the session or the  
15       successive sessions aforesaid, both Houses agree in making any modification in the rule or both Houses agree that the rule should not be made, the rule shall thereafter have effect only in such modified form or be of no effect, as the case may be; so, however, that any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything  
20       previously done under that rule.

## STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

India is the second largest silk producer and the largest consumer in the world. The demand of silk goods, particularly silk sarees, is so high that India needs to import large quantity of raw silk to meet the domestic demand. The major silk-producing states in the country are Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. The country's sericulture industry employs around 9.2 million people in rural and semi-urban areas (as per year 2022-23) for raw silk cultivation, production of silk goods and marketing activities. The industry is one of the largest foreign exchange earners in the country with exports to more than 30 countries in the world. The sericulture activities in India are spread across 52,360 villages.

2. As far as woven silk products are concerned, there are two major categories: hand-woven silk products and power loom silk products. Handloom products are woven by hand on simple machine loom and power loom sarees by machine, powered with the electric motor. Handloom is a dying skill, rapidly being replaced by power loom as it produces fast and at cheaper rates.

3. The handloom silk industry run by traditional weavers is facing many challenges in different ways including price fluctuation of raw silk, and competition from synthetic fibers. The conditions of traditional silk weavers in the country are pathetic and they are facing a lot of difficulties in keeping the heritage alive.

4. A case in point is the weavers of Bhagalpur, Bihar, once called the Silk City of Bihar. Five years back, there used to be around two lakh weavers in Bhagalpur, but now only 60,000 weavers are there and the business from the place has also come down from Rs. 600 crore in 2015 to Rs. 150 crore at present. Bhagalpur silk is a renowned product in the world and has got the Government's Geographical Indication tag, in view of its quality and distinctiveness. Around 1000 weavers of the place have GI certificates. Bhagalpur Silk Sarees boast a rich heritage that dates back to centuries. Crafted by skilled artisans using traditional techniques passed down through generations, the sarees embody the cultural essence of the region. The art of weaving Bhagalpur Silk is deeply ingrained in the local community with weavers meticulously creating each saree with passion and expertise. Earlier, the core process of extracting the filaments from cocoons to preparing yarn, used to take place in Bhagalpur, but now the yarn is being procured from other cities like Surat, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru and Kolkata, which sometimes gets mixed with silk imported from China and Korea. In view of the reducing demand of handloom sarees and the rising cost of the yarn, the silk industry of Bhagalpur is dying. The traditional weavers who have worked for generations are leaving the city or are opting for some other occupation for their livelihood as there is no business. These weavers need incentives and subsidies, uninterrupted power supply, continuous work, and housing facilities.

5. In the same way, there are millions of traditional handloom silk weavers spread across various parts of our country. On the one hand, silk export is increasing, earning huge foreign exchange and on the other hand, the handloom silk weavers and their families live in abject poverty nearly hand to mouth. There are many problems experienced by traditional handloom silk weavers, including limited facilities, and extreme competition from power looms, fluctuating cost of raw material, etc. For most of the traditional handloom silk weavers, it is their family profession, which

passes on from one generation to other and their entire families are involved in this profession. For them, weaving is the only source of their livelihood and prosperity. It is important to stand for these people and value their art, tradition, time, skill and effort that goes into making these exquisite handloom sarees and other products.

6. Since the poor handloom silk weavers are part and parcel of our society and ours being a welfare State, it is necessary that the handloom silk weavers too are provided with adequate insurance cover against accidents, healthcare, financial assistance in case of need, educational, vocational facilities for their children, etc. Urgent remedial measures have to be taken for the welfare and protection of traditional handloom silk weavers. It has, therefore, been proposed through this Bill to establish the National Traditional Handloom Silk Weavers Welfare Council and also the Traditional Handloom Silk Weavers Welfare Fund to improve the plight of the traditional handloom silk weavers and save them from starvation in various parts of our nation.

Hence this Bill.

A. D. SINGH

## FINANCIAL MEMORANDUM

Clause 4 of the Bill seeks to constitute the National Traditional Handloom Silk Weavers Welfare Council along with a secretariat with such number of officers and staff to aid the efficient functioning of the Council. Clause 5 provides for certain steps to be taken by the Council for ensuring the welfare of traditional handloom silk weavers. Clause 6 provides for the constitution of the Traditional Handloom Silk Weavers Welfare Fund. Clause 7 provides that the Central Government shall provide Funds to the Council.

The Bill, therefore, if enacted, will involve expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India. It is estimated that a sum of Rupees five hundred crore is likely to be involved as recurring expenditure per annum.

A non-recurring expenditure of rupees two hundred crore is also likely to be incurred.



#### MEMORANDUM REGARDING DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Clause 9 of the Bill empowers the Central Government to make provisions through an order to remove any difficulties likely to arise in giving effect to the provisions of the Bill, if enacted. Clause 11 of the Bill empowers the Central Government to make rules for carrying out the purposes of the Bill.

As the orders and rules will relate to matters of detail only, the delegation of legislative power is of a normal character.

RAJYA SABHA

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BILL

*to provide for the protection of traditional handloom silk weavers in the country particularly in Bhagalpur in Bihar and for welfare measures including life insurance coverage, healthcare, educational facilities to the children of such weavers and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.*

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*(Shri A. D. Singh, M.P.)*