

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2076
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20.12.2023

PROMOTING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

2076 DR. ANIL SUKHDEORAO BONDE:

Will the Minister of Women and Child Development be pleased to state:

- (a) India's achievements in pilot representation, STEM education, and financial inclusion contributed to its recognition as a global leader in gender equality; and
- (b) the details of specific initiatives and programs that have been instrumental in driving India's positive trajectory in promoting women's empowerment?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI SMRITI ZUBIN IRANI)

(a) & (b): Gender justice is an important commitment of the Government as enshrined in the Constitution of India. In order to promote a gender just society and increased representation of women in various domains, several steps have been taken by the Government over the years. These include enactment of criminal laws and special laws like 'the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005', 'the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961', 'the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006'; 'the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986'; 'the Sexual Harassment of Women (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013', 'the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956', 'the Commission of Sati Prevention Act, 1987', 'the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012', 'the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, minimum 1/3rd reservations for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), reservation for women in central/ state police forces, enabling provisions for induction of women in National Defence Academy (NDA) and Sainik Schools, Commando Forces etc.

In the past few years, India is witnessing a rapid transition from women's-development to women-led development with the vision of a new India. To this end, the Government has adopted multi-pronged approach to address issues of women on a life-cycle continuum basis encompassing educational, social, economic and political empowerment, so that they become equal partners in fast paced and sustainable national development.

India is presently one of the only 15 countries in the world with a woman Head of State. Globally, India has the largest absolute number of elected women representatives in local governments. India has 10% more women pilots than the global average. Globally, according to the International Society of Women Airline Pilots, around 5 per cent of pilots are women. In India, the share of women pilots is significantly higher - over 15 per cent.

Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued an advisory to all scheduled airlines and major airport operators of India to participate in the International Air Transport Association (IATA) 25 by 2025 initiative which is an industry-wide diversity and inclusion project that aims to increase the number of women in senior positions by either 25% against currently reported metrics or to a minimum representation of 25% by 2025. Airports Authority of India (AAI) has enabled female participation in sensitive domains fundamental to the functioning of the organization such as Air Traffic Control, Fire Services, Airport Operations. Further waiver in fee is granted to female candidates in Direct Recruitment exercise conducted by AAI.

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of girls in Primary and Secondary Education is almost at par with that of boys. The presence of girls/ women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is 43%, which is one of highest in the world. Multiple initiatives for increasing participation of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) have been undertaken. VigyanJyoti was launched in 2020 to balance low representation of girls in different streams of Science and Technology from 9th to 12th standards. The Overseas Fellowship Scheme started in 2017-18, provides opportunities to Indian Women Scientist and Technologists to undertake international collaborative research in STEM. Several women scientists have played significant roles in India's maiden Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM), or Mangalyaan, including building and testing the scientific instruments at the Space Application Centre.

Further, Government of India has taken various schematic and legislative interventions and made enabling provisions to ensure women's participation in various professions. In order to enhance the employability of female workers, under Skill India Mission, the Government is providing training to them through a network of Women Industrial Training Institutes, National Vocational Training Institutes and Regional Vocational Training Institutes.

In order to encourage employment of women, a number of enabling provisions have been incorporated in the recently enacted Labour Codes viz. the Code on Wages, 2019, the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 and the Code on Social Security, 2020 for creating congenial work environment for women workers.

National Agriculture Market or eNAM is an online trading platform for agricultural commodities, scheme "Kisan Call Centres" answering farmers' queries on a telephone call in their own dialect, mobile applications like KisanSuvudha, Agri Market, National Crop Insurance Portal, UMANG (Unified Mobile Application for New-Age Governance). These digital innovations are helping women overcome or compensate the barriers they face in accessing markets.

The Government of India implements "Mission Shakti" which has two components, Sambal and Samarthya. Under "Sambal", components such as Beti Bachao Beti Pado, One Stop Centre, Women Help Line and Nari Adalat are in operation. The "Samarthya", sub-scheme, the components are Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Shakti Sadan, Hub for Empowerment of Women, Sakhi Niwas i.e. Working Women Hostel, Palna, Anganwadi cum Creches.

Farmers' welfare schemes like Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maan Dhan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, etc. continue to nurture an enabling environment for women farmers. Through the initiatives Government is improving farm women's access to productive resources including agricultural extension services thereby bringing overall improvement in the lives of rural women.

National Cooperative Development Corporation is playing a significant role to uplift women cooperatives as large number of women are engaged and involved in cooperatives dealing with activities related to food grain processing, plantation crops, oilseeds processing, fisheries, dairy & livestock, spinning mills, handloom and power loom weaving, Integrated Cooperative Development Projects, etc.

Under the Government's flagship scheme Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM), about 90 lakh women Self Help Groups (SHGs) having nearly 10 crores female members are transforming the rural landscape with regard to women's economic empowerment.

Most of the nearly 40 million houses sanctioned under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana or the Prime Minister's Housing Scheme are in the name of women. All this has increased the participation of women in financial decision making. 'Vocal for Local' has a lot to do with women's empowerment, as the power of most local products is in the hands of women.

The Government has made enabling provision for increasing the representation of women in Armed forces such as granting permanent commission to women including in combat roles such as fighter pilots, allowing entry of women in National Defence Academy (NDA), admission of girls in Sainik schools, etc. In Indian Air Force (IAF), Women officers are inducted in all the branches and streams. IAF for the first time has inducted women in other ranks as Agniveervayu under Agnipath Scheme. At present, 154 Women candidates are undergoing training.

The Government has also taken various women centric initiatives which may encourage participation of more women in Government service. These, inter-alia, include availing Child Care Leave (CCL), leaving headquarters and proceeding on foreign travel during CCL, Special Allowance @Rs. 3000 per month to women employees with disability for child care, special dispensation for women officers of All India Service of North East cadres, leave upto 90 days to the female Government Servants who have been allegedly sexually harassed, exemption of fee from competitive examination for women, posting of husband and wife at the same station, etc. The States/ UTs have also been advised to increase the number of women bus

drivers, conductors and tourist guides. Further, the Government has also issued advisories to all the State Governments and Union Territories to increase the representation of women to 33 per cent of the total strength of the police personnel in the States/ UTs.

There is increased presence of women in public life. In the 2019 Lok Sabha election for the first time in the country since independence, 81 women were elected as Members of Lok Sabha. There are over 1.45 million or 46% women elected representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions (against mandatory representation of 33%). The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1992) to the Constitution of India had made reservation of 1/3 seats in the Panchayats and Municipalities for women.

The greatest leap forward for women empowerment and representation of women in the highest political offices in the country has been the notification by Government of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 (Constitution One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023 on 28 September, 2023, for reservation of one-third of seats for women in the House of People (Lok Sabha) and in the State Legislative Assemblies including Legislative Assembly of NCT of Delhi.
