

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

**RAJYA SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 473**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 03.12.2025

**GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

473. DR. M. DHANAPAL:

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

- (a) whether Government has made progress towards achieving gender equality, empowerment of women, improving access to education, health services and economic opportunities;
- (b) if so, the details of the steps that have been taken by Government to remove barriers to women's economic, civic participation, access to services and leadership roles nationwide; and
- (c) if not, the reasons therefor?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT  
(SHRIMATI SAVITRI THAKUR)

**(a) to (c):** Government has adopted a multi-pronged approach on a life-cycle continuum basis to address the issue of educational, social, economic and political empowerment of women. As a result, India is witnessing a rapid transition from women's-development to women led development with the vision of a new India where women are leading the way for fast paced and sustainable national development.

The greatest leap forward for women's political empowerment was taken by enactment of "the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023" (Constitution One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act 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.

In order to encourage employment of women, the four Labour Codes - the Code on Wages, 2019, the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, the Code on Social Security, 2020 and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 have been implemented with effect from 21st November 2025, rationalizing 29 erstwhile labour laws. As part of the reforms, the codes prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender, mandate equal pay, and open doors for women to work across all sectors at all times, including underground mining and heavy

machinery, night shifts, subject to their prior consent and adequate safety measures by employers.

With a view to ensure safety of women at workplace, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has put in place an electronic platform “SHe-Box portal” duly encompassing various provisions of ‘the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013’ (SH Act). This portal provides a publicly available centralised repository of information related to Internal Committees (ICs) and Local Committees (LCs) formed across the country, whether in government or private sector. It also provides a common platform to file complaints and track the status of such complaints. The portal includes a feature where complaints registered on it will be automatically forwarded to the IC/ LC of the workplaces concerned within the Central Ministries/ Departments, States/ UTs and in Private sector. The portal provides for designating a nodal officer for every workplace who is required to ensure updation of data/ information on a regular basis for real time monitoring of complaints. The portal is available in 22 languages for facilitating its access to the working women in remote and far flung areas.

For safety and security of women and girls, Government has taken several steps, one of which is to modernize and improve the criminal justice system. The Government has enacted Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) which came into effect from 1st July, 2024. In BNS 2023, the offences against women and children earlier scattered in Indian Penal Code, 1860 have been brought together and consolidated under Chapter-V. It has introduced new provisions to strengthen laws related to women and children, specifically, Section 111 related to “organized crime”, Section 69 related to sexual intercourse on false promise of marriage, employment, promotion or by suppressing the identity, Section 95 related to hiring, employing or engaging a child to commit an offence etc. In respect of the crimes related to buying a child for the purposes of prostitution (Section 99), gang rape (Section 70) and exploitation of a trafficked person (Section 144), punishment has been increased. Further, in respect of certain severe crimes against women like buying child for the purposes of prostitution (section 99 of BNS), organised crime (Section 111), kidnapping or maiming a child for purpose of begging (Section 139), mandatory minimum punishments have been prescribed. Also, Sections 75 and 79 of BNS 2023 provide additional legal protections against harassment, covering actions like unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, sexually coloured remarks and also word, gesture or act intended to insult modesty of a woman. A woman facing sexual harassment at workplace has an option to file a complaint under these provisions.

The BNSS takes a victim-centric approach, safeguarding victims’ rights throughout the legal process. It introduces e-FIR and zero FIR provisions to facilitate swift registration of complaints for serious offenses against women, ensuring timely police action. Additionally, provisions under section 398 BNSS which introduce Witness Protection Schemes, acknowledging the critical need to shield witnesses from threats and intimidation and Section 2(1)(d) of BSA which now enables electronic or digital record on emails, documents on computers, laptop or smartphone, messages and voice mail messages stored on digital devices

under definition of documents can also be referred for protection of women from harassment at workplace.

Together, these measures demonstrate a comprehensive approach to women's empowerment, which also extends to increasing representation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), such as Women Scientist Scheme, Vigyan Jyoti scheme, Overseas Fellowship Scheme, have been undertaken.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development implements an umbrella scheme, "Mission Shakti" for safety, security and empowerment of women. Under the scheme, the Government has set up One Stop Centres across the country to provide integrated help and support to women facing violence or those in distress, a 24x7 women helpline with telephonic short code 181 which, besides provides emergency and non emergency support to the needy women by connecting them with appropriate authorities, also provides information related to various government schemes, policies and programmes to enable them to avail the benefits. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) component of the scheme, is for preventing gender based sex-selection and also focuses on awareness generation on gender equality and discouraging child marriage. The BBBP has played a pivotal role in the psyche of citizens towards valuing the girl child. The component of Shakti Sadan provides help and support to women in distress, destitute and victims of unfortunate circumstances including the victims of trafficking. The Sakhi Niwas component is for providing safe and affordable accommodation with childcare facilities to the working women and women and girls pursuing higher education and training for employment and self-employment. The Palna component provides childcare facilities in the Anganwadi – cum-crèches to promote women's participation in the workforce. The Hubs for Empowerment of Women at the national, state and district levels address the issue of information asymmetry with regard to government schemes pertaining to women in rural and urban areas. Under the Pradhan Mantri Mantru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), cash benefits through direct benefit transfer (DBT) mode are provided to pregnant women and lactating mothers.

The schemes such as Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana have incentivized financial investments into the girls' future. Schemes like Samagra Shiksha, provision of separate toilet for girls in schools, various scholarship schemes, provision of affordable and quality sanitary napkins under Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana, etc. have also contributed towards behavioural changes resulting in increased enrolment of girls in educational institutions.

The Government of India, through the Public Procurement Policy, has mandated that all Central Ministries/ Departments/ Public Sector Enterprises procure at least 3% of their annual procurement from women-owned Micro and Small Enterprises.

To ensure economic independence of women through skill development and vocational training, the Government has also introduced Skill India Mission. Government has also set up the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana across the country. Emphasis has been laid on creating additional infrastructure both for training and apprenticeship for women. Similarly, Government implements the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) to provide digital literacy to rural population. These

schemes have also helped women and girls in gaining necessary skills required for jobs and entrepreneurship.

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojna - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), under which approximately 90 lakhs women self-help groups having nearly 10 crore members are changing the rural landscape for employment/ self-employment. Similarly, National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM) is for urban areas. Besides, there are schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), Stand-up India, Start-up India, Pradhan Mantri Street Vendors AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), for providing employment/ self-employment and credit facilities. Majority of the beneficiaries under these schemes are women.

Under Ayushman Bharat, the Government is providing free of cost treatment through over 1200 medical packages to over 55 crore citizens. Out of these, over 141 medical packages are exclusively designed for addressing medical needs of women. Seven types of screening (TB, Hypertension, Diabetes, Oral Cancer, Breast Cancer, Cervical Cancer and Cataract) are provided under the scheme, which have benefitted crores of women. There are over 150,000 Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs), also referred to as Ayushman Arogya Mandir, in both urban and rural areas, bring health care closer to the community.

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PMJAY) is the world's largest public funded health assurance scheme, with special focus on poor and disadvantaged women. There are over 16,000 Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJK) functional across the country. The PMBJK besides providing affordable medicines and medical devices, including about 40 women specific items also have provision for sale of Sanitary Napkins named 'Suvidha Sanitary Napkins' at extremely affordable price of Rupee 1 per pad. National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), Atal Pension Yojana (APY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) and Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) have been implemented to provide social protection through insurance coverage and pension.

Recognizing language as a fundamental force for positive cultural change, striving to cultivate an environment where diverse perspectives are acknowledged, valued, and empowered, Government launched a Guide on Gender-Inclusive Communication, in November 2023, aimed at changing entrenched linguistic norms to promote and provide practical insights and strategies to overcome the deeply rooted biases present in language.

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