

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 27*
TO BE ANSWERED ON 03.02.2023

SAFETY OF WOMEN

*27. SHRIMATI QUEEN OJA:

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

- (a) whether there is a growing trend of women getting employment in villages, towns and cities which require working and commuting at late hours endangering their safety;
- (b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto and the remedial steps taken/ proposed to be taken in this regard;
- (c) whether there is any plan to review/ fix the working hours of women at all workplaces; and
- (d) the concrete steps taken/ being taken by the Government for the safety of working women?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 27* FOR ANSWER ON 03.02.2023 ASKED BY SHRIMATI QUEEN OJA REGARDING 'SAFETY OF WOMEN'

(a) to (d) : The data on Employment and unemployment is collected through Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) conducted by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MOSPI). As per the latest PLFS report available for year 2020-21, the estimated Labour Force Participation Rate of female has increased from 22.8% in 2019-20 to 25.1% in 2020-21.

The Government has taken various steps to improve women's participation in the labour force and quality of their employment. A number of protective provisions have been incorporated in the labour laws for equal opportunity and congenial work environment for women workers. The Code on Social Security, 2020 has the provisions for enhancement in paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks, provision for mandatory crèche facility in the establishments having 50 or more employees, permitting women workers in the night shifts with adequate safety measures, etc.

The Code on Occupational Safety, Health And Working Conditions (OSH), 2020 has the provisions for the employment of women in the aboveground mines including opencast workings has been allowed between 7 pm and 6 am, and in below ground working between 6 am and 7 pm in technical, supervisory and managerial work where continuous presence may not be required.

Further, the Maternity Benefit Act (Amendment) Act, 2017 enabled provision for 'Work from Home', after availing of the maternity benefit by the woman, where the nature of work being assigned of such nature, for such period and on such conditions mutually agreed upon by the employer and the woman.

Though 'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India and responsibility to maintain law and order, protection of life and property of the citizens including investigation and prosecution in cases of crime against women and children rests primarily with the respective State Governments, the Central Government gives highest priority to ensuring safety and security of women, including working women, and has undertaken various legislative and schematic interventions in this regard. Keeping this in view, the Government has enacted "the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013" (SH Act) which aims to provide protection to women against sexual harassment at workplace and for the prevention and redressal of complaints related to it. The Act covers all women, irrespective of their age, employment status or nature of work whether working in public or private, organised or unorganised sector. The Act casts an obligation upon employers of all workplaces, public or private, to provide a safe and secure working environment free from sexual harassment. The Act has enough provisions to deal with various aspects of the matter including penal provisions for those who violate the provisions of the Act including the employers. The transportation provided by the employer to women employee has been defined as a workplace for the purpose of provisions under this Act, thereby putting additional responsibility upon employer for ensuring safety and security of women employees.

For effective implementation of the Act, the Government has amended the Company (Account) Rules, 2014 thereby making disclosure regarding implementation of SH Act mandatory within Director's Report. Further, the Act cast an obligation upon employer to include the number of cases filed, if any, and their disposal under this Act in the annual report of the organisation or where no such report is required to be prepared, intimate such number of cases, if any, to the District Officer.

The Government of India has also enacted the Factories Act, 1948 which provides for the occupational safety, health & welfare of workers including women workers working in the factories registered under the said Act. Specific provisions have been prescribed for the occupational safety of the workers at workplace under Chapter IV of the Factories Act, 1948.

The schemes/ projects implemented by the Government under Nirbhaya Fund for safety and security of women including working women include One Stop Centres (OSCs); Universalisation of Women Helplines (WHL), Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) which is a pan-India single number (112)/ mobile app based system for emergencies; a cyber-crime reporting portal to report obscene content; safe city projects in 8 cities (Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow and Mumbai) including infrastructure, technology adoption and capacity building in community through awareness programmes; setting up/ strengthening of Women Help Desks (WHDs) at Police Stations etc., Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) has also undertaken several initiatives, which, inter-alia includes training and skill development programs for Investigation Officers, Prosecution Officers and Medical Officers etc. BPR&D has also prepared Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) for 'Women Help Desk at Police Stations' to ensure smooth functioning of Women Help Desks by focusing on four critical components, viz. infrastructure, training, human resource development and response mechanism.

The Government also implements Sakhi Niwas (erstwhile Working Women Hostel) component of the sub-scheme 'Samarthya' under Mission Shakti for providing working women with support services like safe accommodation with food and medical assistance. It bridges a critical gap for women empowerment and aims towards social, cultural, political and economic development.

Further, the Government implements Palna (previously known as National Creche Scheme) component of the sub-scheme 'Samarthya' under Mission Shakti to provide creche facilities for women with small children through Stand-alone creches as well as Anganwadi-cum creches.

The Ministry also undertakes awareness exercise for safety and security of women and children from time to time. Further, the Government, through institutions like the National Commission for Women (NCW), and their counterparts in States have been spreading awareness through seminars, workshops, audio- visual, print and electronic media etc. to sensitize the people about the safety and security of women and also about various provisions of the legislation etc. In addition, Ministry of Women and Child Development and Ministry of Home Affairs have issued advisories to States/ UTs from time to time on various issues pertaining to safety and security of women and children.

In addition, National Commission of Women collaborates with National Legal Services Authority in spreading legal awareness across India. The Commission also conducts awareness seminars on Anti Human Trafficking in different States/UTs for sensitization of various stakeholders. In addition, every year the Commission collaborates with Government, Semi Government organizations, Universities, Academic and Research Organisations, etc. to undertake Seminars/Webinars/Conferences /Workshops and Research Studies to implement the mandate under Section 10 of the NCW Act, 1990 on gender specific themes relating to the current issues regarding safety, security and empowerment of women.
