

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UN-STARRED QUESTION NO.1032
TO BE ANSWERED ON 03.12.2021

AWARENESS AGAINST WITCH-HUNTING

1032. SHRI PINAKI MISRA:

Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has plans to introduce a special law to criminalize witch-hunting and related forms of violence;
- (b) if so, the present status thereof along with the time by which it is likely to be introduced;
- (c) if not, the reasons therefor;
- (d) whether the Government has conducted any study to understand the underlying reasons of witch-hunt, if so, the details of the respective study and if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (e) the steps taken by the Government to raise awareness against witch-hunting and superstition in India and particularly in Odisha?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (c): Harassment, torture, murder or other forms of violence which tend to get associated with the practice of witch-hunting are already punishable under the Indian Penal Code (IPC). 'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. The responsibilities to maintain law and order, protection of life and property of citizens, investigation and prosecution of crime against women, including for witch hunting and related forms of violence, rest with the respective State Governments. The State Governments are competent to deal with such offences under the extant provisions of laws.

(d) & (e): The National Commission for Women (NCW) has got a study conducted on 'Violence against Dalit Women in Different States of India' which also included the menace of witch-hunting. The Government takes into account the recommendations of NCW for strengthening the policies and programmes from time to time.

The Government is making concerted efforts for protection of women and girls and advancing their rights by addressing the issue of safety and security through various schematic and legislative interventions. The Government and its associated organisations such as NCW also undertake awareness campaigns and organize seminars, workshops etc. from time to time for raising awareness among masses on the issues relating to safety, security and empowerment of women and girls.

The Government of Odisha has notified "The Odisha Prevention of Witch-Hunting Act, 2013" with effect from 25.02.2014 and has undertaken IEC activities for creating social and legal awareness against witch-hunting with the help of anganwadi workers, self help groups, panchayati raj institutions etc.
