

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3024
TO BE ANSWERED ON 13.12.2024

RIGHTS OF WOMAN

3024. SMT. HARSIMRAT KAUR BADAL:

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

- (a) whether any specific interventions have been made towards reducing violence against women in the country during the last five years, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the manner in which the awareness about women's rights is being promoted among rural populations in the country indicating the funds allocated and schemes implemented for the purpose;
- (c) whether the violence against women in the country has risen during the last five years, if so, the details thereof and reasons therefor along with the corrective steps, if any, proposed/taken by the Government in this regard; and
- (d) the manner in which the Government plans to ensure safer environment for women in the country?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d): 'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India and the responsibility to maintain law and order, protection of life and property of the citizens including investigation and prosecution of crime against women rests primarily with the respective State Governments; they are competent to deal with such crimes.

As per the data reported by NCRB, which is available upto the year 2022 at its website <https://ncrb.gov.in/en/crime-india>, the number of crimes against women in 2021 and

2022 were 428278 and 445256 respectively. Increased reporting of crime may be attributable to the increased level of awareness among citizens due to various measures taken by government in the last few years including the operationalisation of helplines such as Women Helpline -181 and Emergency Response Support System (ERSS-112), concept of Zero e-FIR and provision of institutional support to the survivors.

To promote women's empowerment and their safety, and to increase their participation in the workforce, government has taken several steps. Some recent laws and policies that directly and indirectly cater to the safety of women in the workplace are listed below:

- i. The Government of India with an aim to modernize and improve the criminal justice system has enacted Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (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 of BNS. The BNS 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. Such a woman facing sexual harassment at workplace has an option to file a complaint under these provisions.

- ii. 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.
- iii. Further, the Labour Codes, collectively include provisions to promote participation of women in workforce in a dignified manner and with adequate safety measures adopted by the employers. Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code, 2020 consolidates and amends laws regulating the safety, health, and working conditions of workers, with specific provisions to ensure the safety of women at the workplace. Code on Wages, 2019 aims to ensure a minimum wage for all workers, including women, and includes provisions to promote gender-neutral job advertisements and eliminate gender bias in recruitment and promotion. Code on Social Security, 2020 provides social security to workers, including women, and includes provisions for maternity benefits and creche facilities.
- iv. The Ministry of Women and Child Development recently launched the 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.

- v. Under Nirbhaya Fund, Government has taken several measures to improve safety of women at workplace:
- a. The component of One Stop Centre (OSCs) under 'Sambal' sub-scheme of 'Mission Shakti', a comprehensive Umbrella Scheme for safety, security and empowerment of women is implemented under the Nirbhaya Fund. The OSCs provide women affected by violence and who are in distress with a range of integrated services under one roof such as Police facilitation, medical aid, providing legal aid and legal counselling, psycho-social counselling, temporary shelter up to 5 days.
 - b. A fully functional dedicated 24x7x365 toll-free Women Helpline-181 (WHL) under Nirbhaya Fund is also functional to provide emergency and non-emergency response to women affected by violence and those in distress across the country. This helpline is fully integrated with 112. To provide help and support to needy women and women in distress, Emergency Response Support System (ERSS-112) has been established in all 36 States and UTs for various emergencies, with computer aided dispatch of field/police resources. As of October 31, 2024, a total of 81,64,796 women have been assisted through 181 across the country.
 - c. In addition, under Nirbhaya Fund, the Central Government has provided assistance to States/ UTs for setting up/ strengthening Women Help Desks (WHDs) in all police stations. So far, 14658 Women Help Desks have been established in police stations.
 - d. To ensure safety of public places where women work and live, various components under Safe City Projects have been implemented in 8 Cities (namely Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow and Mumbai). To ensure safe transportation for women, rail and road transport projects like Integrated Emergency Response Management System (IERMS), Video Surveillance System at Konkan Railway, Artificial Intelligence (AI) based Facial Recognition System (FRS) integrated with Video surveillance Systems, including Command-and-Control Centre at 7 major railway stations and tabs for safety of women passengers on board the train by Ministry of Railways, and projects like Vehicle Tracking Platform with command and

control centre across States/ UTs, and some State specific projects like Uttar Pradesh Road transport Corporation (UPSRTC), Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTTC), Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC), etc. by Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, have been implemented.

- vi. Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) has also undertaken several initiatives, which, inter-alia include training and skill development programs for Investigation Officers, Prosecution Officers and Medical Officers. BPR&D has also prepared Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) for 'Women Help Desk at Police Stations' to ensure their smooth functioning. Emphasis has been laid upon appropriate behavioural and attitudinal skills of the police in course of prevention and detection of crime against women and children and interaction with victims of crime. Webinars on women safety with sensitivity, gender sensitization of police personnel etc. have also been organized by BPR&D.
- vii. Recognizing the need for psycho-social counselling to women affected by violence and those in distress, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has engaged the services of National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) for providing basic and advanced training under the project named 'Stree Manoraksha' to the staff of One Stop Centres (OSCs) across the country on handling psycho-social and mental health care needs of women facing violence and distress.
- viii. Further, the Ministry of Women and Child Development also administers sub-scheme "Samarthya" under Mission Shakti in which the component of Shakti Sadan is for relief and rehabilitation of women in difficult circumstances.
- ix. Another component Sakhi Niwas (Working Women's Hostels) of Mission Shakti provides safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women, with day care facility for their children, wherever possible, in urban, semi urban, or even rural areas where employment opportunities for women exist. The government has also earmarked Rs. 5000 Crore during the current financial year for providing financial assistance to States for establishing working women

hostels under the Scheme of Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI).

- x. The Government, through institutions like the National Commission for Women (NCW) and its counterparts in States has 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 and policies 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. In respect of the registered complaints, NCW takes up the matter with stakeholders especially the Police Authorities to ensure that the complaints are redressed and brought to logical conclusion.
