

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 795**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 07.02.2025

**CASES OF WITCH-HUNTING**

795 DR. RANI SRIKUMAR:

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

- (a) whether the Government is aware of the increase in witch-hunting across the country and if so, the details of the initiatives taken to address it;
- (b) the details of the institutional support offered to women branded as witches across the country along with the beneficiaries of said support, state/UT-wise;
- (c) the details of the rehabilitation programmes and skill training programme offered to the women branded as witches and the beneficiaries thereunder, State/UT-wise;
- (d) whether the Government has taken any initiatives to make people aware of the socio-cultural aspects of witch-hunting along with the systematic violence it perpetuates; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

**ANSWER**

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

(a) to (e): Violence, torture, murder and other crimes against women including gender based violence and sexual harassment that are associated with the practice of witch-hunting are already punishable under Chapter-V of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023.

“Police” and “Public Order” are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. The responsibility 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, rests with the respective State Governments. They are competent to deal with such offences under the extant provisions of laws.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development implements a Centrally Sponsored Scheme ‘Mission Shakti’ in the country for the safety, security and empowerment of women. The scheme aims at strengthening interventions for women in need of care and support. It comprises of two sub-schemes ‘Sambal’ and ‘Samarthya’ for safety and security of women and empowerment of women respectively. The “Sambal” vertical is for safety and security of women and the key components namely, One Stop Centres (OSCs) which is an institution located at district level offering under one roof immediate help to women in distress such as temporary shelter, medical & police assistance, counselling and legal support, the Women Helpline (WHL) 181 provides toll-free 24-hours telecom

service to women seeking support and information. The “Samarthya” vertical is for the empowerment of women. Shakti Sadan component of “Samarthya” provides necessary assistance including shelter, food, vocational training for destitute women and women in difficult circumstances. The SANKALP: Hub for Empowerment of Women (HEW) serves as a vehicle to bridge the information and knowledge gap regarding schemes and facilities available for women. Further, initiatives like Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) which is a pan-India single number (112)/ mobile app based system for emergencies, setting up/ strengthening of Women Help Desks (WHDs) at Police Stations etc under Nirbhaya Fund are also available to assist women facing any kind of violence or harassment including that of witch- hunting.

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 to support such women. The Ministry undertakes awareness exercise for safety and security of women and children from time to time.

The Government and its organisations such as National Commission for Women 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.

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