

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1254
TO BE ANSWERED ON 06.02.2026

WOMEN SEX WORKERS

1254. SHRI RAJESH RANJAN:

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

- (a) whether female sex workers have been working illegally in red light areas known by different names in various States/ Union Territories across the country for years;
- (b) if so, the details thereof along with the number of female sex workers working there, State-wise;
- (c) whether the Government intends to provide these women sex workers socio-economic constitutional rights like pension and healthcare;
- (d) if so, the timeline fixed therefor; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI ANNPURNA DEVI)

(a) to (e): “Police” and “Public Order” are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. The responsibility to maintain law and order, protection of life and property of the citizens including investigation and prosecution of crimes related to human trafficking and sexual exploitation of victims of trafficking rests with the respective State Governments and they are competent to deal with it.

The Government of India attaches highest importance to the matter of preventing and countering the crimes against women and children including crimes of human trafficking and is fully committed to check the menace of trafficking. The Central Government has undertaken a number of legislative and schematic interventions to combat trafficking, protect and rehabilitate victims of trafficking.

Sections 143 and 144 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, are crucial components of India's legal framework against human trafficking. These sections replace and expand offenses previously covered under sections 370 and 370A of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. Section 143 of BNS defines trafficking as recruiting, transporting, harbouring, transferring, or receiving a person for exploitation using various coercive means. The section outlines severe punishments for

trafficking, with higher penalties for trafficking multiple persons or children. Further, Section 144 of BNS, 2023, deals with the exploitation of trafficked persons, including sexual exploitation. The section outlines different punishments for exploiting trafficked children and adults, with distinct terms of imprisonment and fines. A new offence of Organized Crime has been added to BNS under Section 111 that covers the crime of trafficking of persons and human trafficking for prostitution as well. Section 95 of BNS related to hiring, employing or engaging a child etc. to commit an offence, Section 99 of BNS related to buying a child for the purposes of prostitution are also relevant in the context of human trafficking. Further, in respect of certain severe crimes against women like buying child for the purposes of prostitution (section 99), organised crime (Section 111), kidnapping or maiming a child for purpose of begging (Section 139), mandatory minimum punishments have been prescribed. Additionally, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 also recognizes trafficking as a cognizable and non-bailable offence. Section 396 of the BNSS, establishes a framework for victim compensation scheme that mandates every State Government to prepare a scheme for providing funds for the purpose of compensation to the victim or his dependents who have suffered loss or injury as a result of the crime and who require rehabilitation. The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 has been enacted to prevent prostitution and trafficking of persons for commercial sexual exploitation and related offences.

There are a number of schemes/ initiatives implemented by various Ministries/ Departments of the Central Government across the country for social and economic empowerment of women, which also includes female sex workers, subject to meeting the eligibility conditions prescribed under such schemes/ initiatives. Some of the major schemes/ programmes in this regard are as follows:-

- i. The Ministry of Women and Child Development during the 15th Finance Commission period with effect from the financial year 2022-23, implements Centrally Sponsored, Mission Shakti Umbrella Scheme for safety, security and empowerment of women. Under Mission Shakti, there is a component of Shakti Sadan which provides necessary assistance including shelter, food, vocational training for destitute women and women in difficult circumstances.
- ii. The Ministry of Women and Child Development also implements the scheme of Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0. It is a universal scheme, under which free services for nutrition and early childhood care and education for children upto six years and pregnant women and lactating mothers are provided.
- iii. Under Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), cash benefit of Rs. 5000/- for first child and Rs. 6000/- for second child, if it is a girl child, are provided in direct benefit transfer mode.
- iv. 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.
- v. In order to reduce drudgery and enhance the ease of living for the women particularly in the rural areas, under the Swacch Bharat Mission more than 11.6 crore toilets have been

constructed, 10.3 crore households have been provided Clean cooking fuel through Ujjawala Yojana and safe and potable tap water connection to nearly 15 crore households through Jal Jeevan Mission.

- vi. Prime Minister Awas Yojana Gramin (PMAY-G) and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Urban (PMAY-U) aim to provide ‘Housing for All’ through provision of pucca house with basic amenities to all houseless families and households living in kutch and dilapidated house in rural areas and the housing requirement of Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) including slum dwellers in the urban areas.
- vii. 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 including female sex workers. 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.
- viii. 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.
- ix. The Central Government had released foodgrains to about 81.35 crore beneficiaries to Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAJ) households and Priority Household (PHH) beneficiaries, as per their entitlement, under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY). Government has decided to continue providing free food grains for the next five years from 2024.
- x. Under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna (PMKVY) and Prime Minister’s Internship Scheme, skill development and vocational training is provided to women.
- xi. Women are also the largest beneficiaries under Prime Minister Jan Dhan Yojna (PM-JDY) one of the largest financial inclusion initiatives in the world which also provides access to direct benefits under various welfare schemes, credit and insurance services.
- xii. Schemes such as MUDRA Yojna, Pradhan Mantri Street Vendors AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi), Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) provide employment/ self-employment and credit facilities. Majority of the beneficiaries under these schemes are women.
