

child friendly provisions of recording of statement and evidence and speedy trial of the cases. There are adequate legal penal provisions including POCSO Act, 2012 for the sexual offences against the children, as per the gravity of offences. However, in the wake of such purported instances through media recently impacting young children, Ministry took up the matter with Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology at the level of Minister and Secretary to take necessary interventions to curb the menace and to ensure the safety and security of children. In order to equip children in negotiating the online world with adequate safety, Ministry of Human Resource Development was requested to issue necessary directions to Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) for incorporating suitable content pertaining to cyber safety in the school curriculum of children and advise State Governments to do the same through their School Boards.

Gender neutral law on sexual offences against children

582. SHRI NARAYAN LAL PANCHARIYA: Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is considering to make punishment for sexual offences against children more stringent;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether Government has taken any decision to make law on sexual offences against children gender neutral; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (DR. VIRENDRA KUMAR): (a) to (d) The existing "Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act" covers sexual abuse of boys also, as it is a gender neutral Act. The Ministry of Law and Justice has vetted the proposal for enhancement of the punishment in cases of sexual assault against children. The proposed amendments once passed by Parliament will be applicable to all children in India except Jammu and Kashmir where POCSO Act, 2012 is not applicable.

Expansion of BBBP scheme

583. DR. L. HANUMANTHAIAH: Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has any plan to expand the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme for empowerment of rural women;