

# The Government is fully committed to promote women's rights and gender equality : Maneka Gandhi

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INVC NEWS New Delhi, The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee conferred the 'Nari Shakti Puraskar-2015' on the occasion of International Women's Day today. The awards are given every year by the Ministry of Women & Child Development to institutions and individuals who have made exceptional contribution towards empowerment of women. Speaking on the occasion, the President Shri Pranab Mukherjee said that it is intolerable that in this day and age, women are still being exposed to barbaric brutality and violence because they are women. He said that the government, civil society and public at large should pledge to work together for developing relevant legal, administrative and other measures to ensure the safety and security of our mothers and sisters. The President said the best practices for the development of women - that have worked well at the grassroots in States and Union Territories should be adopted and up-scaled in Government of India schemes. The president explained that the key - and urgent - priority is to develop a comprehensive approach to the holistic empowerment of women. In her introductory speech, the Minister for Women & Child Development, Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi said that the Nari Shakti Award is the highest and most prestigious Indian National award conferred by the President of India upon exceptional women in recognition of their achievement in promoting positive change and being examples among women. The women recognized by this award have a history of overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles through courage and foresight to bring about positive change they wish to see in the world, the Minister added. Outlining the priorities of her Ministry, Smt Maneka Gandhi said that the Government is fully committed to promote women's rights and gender equality in all policies and planning. The 'BetiBachao, BetiPadhao' (BBBP) launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister last year to save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child, has shown paradigm shift in attitudes towards the girl child. Lauding the efforts made by the state of Haryana, the WCD Minister said that a year after the launch of BBBP many states have shown improvement and particularly Haryana has shown exemplary improvement in sex ratio at birth which improved to 903 in December, 2015, the first time in a decade that it had crossed 900. Initially, BBBP Scheme was implemented in 100 selected Districts and keeping in mind the criticality of the issue and the success of the scheme, the BBBP Scheme has been now expanded to additional 61 districts covering 11 States/UTs, the Minister announced. Smt Maneka Gandhi highlighted the major steps taken by the Ministry of Women and Child Development for safety and security of women as well as their welfare including One Stop Centres to provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence, Scheme for Universalization of Women Helpline intended to provide 24 hours immediate and emergency response to women affected by violence, the SABLA scheme for out-of-school adolescent girls which is being expanded to cover all districts of the country, the Special Mahila Police Volunteers scheme and the Gender Champion programme among others. The government of India confers "Nari Shakti Puraskars" on eminent women and institutions rendering distinguished service to the cause of women especially belonging to the vulnerable and marginalized sections of the society. The recipients draw from institutions and individuals. Nari Shakti Puraskar include Institutional awards in 6 categories instituted in the name of illustrious daughters of India i.e. Rani Rudramma Devi, Mata Jijabai, Kannagi Devi, Rani Gaidinliu Zeliang, Devi Ahilyabai Holkar and Rani Lakshmbai. Besides, there are Individual awards in two categories for courage & bravery and for making outstanding contributions to women's endeavour / community work/ making a difference / women empowerment. Nari Shakti Puraskar carries a cash award of Rs. 2 Lakh and a certificate for institutions and Rs.1 Lakh and a certificate for individuals.

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