

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1030
TO BE ANSWERED ON 25TH JULY 2025**

HIGH PREVALENCE OF LOW BIRTH WEIGHT BABIES

1030. SHRI VIJAYAKUMAR ALIAS VIJAY VASANTH:

Will the **Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE** be pleased to state:

- (a) Whether any specific measures have been taken by the Government to address the high prevalence of low birth weight babies across the country and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) The details of the progress made in reducing low birth weight babies in the country over the last decade and the factors that have contributed to the persistence of this issue in certain regions;
- (c) Whether the Government has taken any measures to ensure that pregnant women, particularly those from socio-economically disadvantaged groups, have access to adequate nutrition and antenatal care to reduce the risk of low birth weight babies and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) Whether the Government has any plan to address the regional disparities in low birth weight prevalence with states like Punjab and Delhi having a higher prevalence compared to North Eastern States like Mizoram and Nagaland and if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) Whether the Government is considering implementing targeted interventions, particularly in regions with high prevalence of low birth weight babies and if so, the details thereof?

**ANSWER
THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY
WELFARE
(SMT. ANUPRIYA PATEL)**

(a), (d) & (e) The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) implements the following interventions related to maternal and child health for addressing the prevalence of low birth weight babies:

- Antenatal care is a key component of maternal health interventions, which include early pregnancy registration, four antenatal check-ups and management of high-risk pregnancies under Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA).
- In addition, frontline workers provide counselling on maternal nutrition and health practices during Village Health and Nutrition Days (VHNDs) and also facilitate

behaviour change communication in the community to reduce the risk of low birth weight babies.

- Iron and Folic Acid (IFA) supplementation is provided through the Anaemia Mukh Bharat programme to prevent and treat maternal anaemia.
- Postnatal interventions focus on the care of newborns, particularly those who are low birth weight or preterm. Facility-Based Newborn Care (FBNC) is provided through Mother Newborn Care Units (MNCUs), Special Newborn Care Units (SNCUs) and Newborn Stabilization Units (NBSUs) which offer specialized care to small and sick newborn.
- The programmatic interventions such as Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC), Home-Based Newborn Care (HBNC), Home-Based Young Child Care (HBYC) and Mother Absolute Affection (MAA) program improves the survival and health outcomes of low birth weight (LBW) babies.
- NHM extends additional support to States and UTs through the Annual Programme Implementation Plan (APIP) for effective implementation and equity in service delivery.
- Periodical field visits, mid-term review meetings with States/ UTs and Common Review Mission (CRM) are key activities for health system strengthening to improve programme implementation.

(b) As per National Family Health Survey (NFHS) Report, the prevalence of low birth weight has shown a declining trend over the past decade from 21.5% in NFHS-3 (2005–06) to 18.2% in NFHS-5 (2019–21). Varying factors including socio-economic disparities and maternal medical conditions are underlying causes of Low Birth Weight in the country.

(c) Under National Health Mission (NHM), the Government of India has undertaken various measures to ensure that all pregnant women including socio-economically disadvantaged groups have the access of Antenatal care services under maternal health to reduce the risk of low birth weight babies across the country, which are given below: -

- Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK) entitles all pregnant woman delivering in public health institutions to have absolutely free and no expense delivery, including caesarean section. The entitlements include free drugs, consumables, free diet during stay, free diagnostics, free transportation and free blood transfusion, if required. Similar entitlements are also in place for sick infants up to one year of age.
- Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) is a demand promotion and conditional cash transfer scheme for promoting institutional delivery.
- Outreach camps are provisioned for improving the reach of health care services especially in tribal and hard to reach areas. This platform is used to increase the awareness for the Maternal & Child health services, community mobilization as well as to track high-risk pregnancies.
- Mother and Child Protection (MCP) Card and Safe Motherhood Booklet are distributed to the pregnant women for educating them on diet, rest, danger signs of pregnancy, benefit schemes and institutional deliveries.
- Anemia Mukh Bharat (AMB) Programme is implemented to reduce anemia among six beneficiaries age group - children (6-59 months), children (5-9 years), adolescents (10

-19 years), pregnant and lactating women and in women of reproductive age group (15-49 years) in life cycle approach through implementation of six interventions via robust institutional mechanism.

- The Ministry also coordinates with Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) to provide supplementary nutrition for pregnant and lactating women to address maternal undernutrition and promote healthier pregnancy outcomes under POSHAN Abhiyaan.
