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Title: Need to ensure maternity benefit to working women in unorganized sector - laid .

SHRIMATI MINATI SEN (JALPAIGURI): The issue of availability of maternity entitlements for women in India is a matter of deep concern in a situation where most working women are not able to access what is their basic rights. The huge majority of working women fall within the unorganized sector, and though the Maternity Benefit Act (1961) itself states that they too are entitled to maternity benefits. The reality is that most of these women are denied their rights. In many cases, pregnancy or even marriage in some cases, is a reason for depriving the poor women of her job. Ironically, the situation gets aggravated by the presence of this protective legislation, which often serves to make women vulnerable in the job market. Employers indulge in unjust practice of reducing women's employment just to evade their commitment on maternity benefits. The legal provision for penalizing the employers resorting to such tactics is observed more in breach. I, therefore, urge upon the Government to act strongly to ensure maternity benefit to working women in unorganized sector and the lacuna in legal provision is corrected immediately in favour of working women.