

## Maternity benefits bill for working women passed

The Lok Sabha Wednesday passed the Maternity Benefits (Amendment) Bill 2008, that aims at providing financial and other benefits including Rs.1000 as medical bonus to the working women.

Labour and Employment Minister Oscar Fernandes, moving the bill in the Lok Sabha, said the bill would ensure enhancing the medical bonus for the women in the organised and unorganised sectors.

Fernandes said the bill intended to increase the medical bonus from Rs.250 to Rs.1000, and the government was also being further empowered to increase the medical bonus from time to time by notification in the official gazette, subject to the ceiling of Rs.20,000.

The bill, already passed by the Rajya Sabha, will soon take the shape of legislation after the official gazette notification is formalized.

Earlier, participating in the discussion, Sumitra Mahajan of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said the government should considerably increase the quantum of bonus and the existing statutory provision of six weeks' maternity leave with pay.

P. Satheedevi of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) sought effective measures from the government to ensure that the benefits of the bill percolate to the needy at the ground level.

Shailendra Kumar of the Samajwadi Party (SP), supporting the bill, asked about the mechanism to monitor the implementation of the provisions of the bill.

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