

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1769
TO BE ANSWERED ON 16.12.2022

UPSURGE IN CASES OF CHILD MARRIAGE

1769. DR. MOHAMMAD JAWED:

Will the Minister of Women and Child Development be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Ministry has taken into cognizance that there is a 34 per cent upsurge in cases registered under Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 in the year 2021 as compared to 2020;
- (b) if so, whether the Ministry has proposed to take corrective steps to mitigate these rising concerns, if so, the details thereof along with the time by which it is likely to be implemented;
- (c) whether the Ministry has undertaken steps to take further stringent measures to deter the rising tendency of child marriage across the country; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof and if not, whether the Ministry is planning to draw a plan of action to address the concern, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI SMRITI ZUBIN IRANI)

(a) to (d): The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) compiles and publishes the data on the number of cases of child marriage registered under 'the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006' in its publication 'Crime in India'. The said report is available upto the year 2021. As per the report, the number of cases of child marriages registered during the year 2020 and 2021 are 785 and 1050 respectively. Higher reporting of cases does not necessarily reflect increase in the number of cases of child marriages, but it may be because of increased awareness among citizens to report such incidents due to initiatives such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), Women Helpline

(181) and Childline (1098) implemented by the Ministry and better enforcement of law by States/ UTs.

'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. The responsibilities to maintain law and order, protection of life and property of the citizens, investigation and prosecution of crime against women and children including prohibition of child marriages, rest with the respective State Governments. The State Governments are competent to deal with such offenses under the extant provisions of laws.

'The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006' authorises the State Government to appoint for the whole State, or such part thereof as may be specified, an officer or officers to be known as the 'Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPO)' having jurisdiction over the area or areas specified in the notification. This section also specifies the functions to be discharged by CMPOs, which also include preventing solemnisation of child marriages by taking such action as they may deem fit; to collect evidence for the effective prosecution of persons contravening the provisions of the Act; to advise the individuals or counsel the residents of the locality not to indulge in promoting, helping, aiding or allowing the solemnisation of child marriages; to create awareness about the ill effects of child marriages; and to sensitize the community on the issue of child marriages. These authorities function under the respective State Governments/ UT Administrations. As such, implementation of the provisions of the Act lies with them.

The Central Government also undertakes awareness drives, media campaigns and outreach programs and issues advisories to the States/ UTs from time to time to highlight evil effects of this practice. Further, the Ministry of Women and Child Development implements 'Mission Shakti', an umbrella scheme for safety, security and empowerment of women. Under the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)' component of 'Sambal' sub-scheme of 'Mission Shakti', awareness generation on matters pertaining to gender equality and discouraging child marriage is an important focus area. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) also undertakes awareness programs and consultations with stakeholders from time to time in this regard.

In addition, Government of India is running Childline with short code 1098, a 24X7 telephone emergency outreach service for children in crisis which responds with suitable interventions to call for any form of assistance which a child requires, including for prevention of child marriages in coordination with police, CMPOs, District Child Protection Units etc.
