

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 636**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 09.12.2022

**PROHIBITION OF CHILD MARRIAGE**

636. SHRI MANICKAM TAGORE B:

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

- (a) whether many stakeholders, including NGOs and religious bodies had expressed reservation about the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether a global steering Committee visited India to witness State interventions to reduce the incidents of child marriages and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether it is also true that COVID-19 pandemic has led to increase in the number of child marriages in the country; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and corrective measures taken by the Government in this regard?

**ANSWER**

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

(a) to (e): The Government has introduced a Bill namely 'the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021 in the Parliament on 21.12.2021 for raising the age of marriage of women to 21 years to make it at par with the men. The Bill has been referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports(EWCYS) for examination.

So far as global steering Committee visit to India to witness State interventions to reduce the incidents of child marriages is concerned, the Ministry of Women & Child Development is not aware of the status and mandate of this Committee.

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 2019, 2020 and 2021 are 523, 785 and 1050 respectively.

'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.

Section 16 of Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) 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.

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