

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.314
TO BE ANSWERED ON 03.02.2023

MARRIAGE AGE OF WOMEN

314. SHRI KUMBAKUDI SUDHAKARAN:
SHRI K. MURALEEDHARAN:
SHRI BHAGIRATH CHOUDHARY:

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

- (a) whether the Government is planning to increase the age of marriage for women to 21;
- (b) if so, whether the Government is aware that this contradicts the Law Commission's recommendation to have 18 as the minimum age for marriage and if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Task Force constituted to reconsider the age of marriage for women age of motherhood and related matter have submitted the report, if so, the details of the findings and recommendation of the Task Force;
- (d) whether the Government is aware of the prevalence of marriage of girls under 18 and has it considered the fact that the changed policies would account for the increased enforcement burden; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (e): The Government had introduced a Bill namely 'The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021' in the Lok Sabha on 21.12.2021 for raising the minimum age of marriage of women to 21 years to make it at par with that of men. The Bill also has provisions to make consequential amendments in the enactments, inter alia, relating to age of marriage of parties, such as 'The Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872'; 'The Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936'; 'The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937'; 'The Special Marriage Act, 1954'; 'The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955'; and 'The Foreign Marriage Act, 1969'. The Bill has been referred to Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports for examination.

Prior to introduction of the aforesaid Bill in the Parliament, Government had constituted a Task Force to examine the correlation of age of marriage and motherhood and other related aspects. The Task Force held consultations with the concerned stakeholders including relevant Ministries/ Departments, academia, civil society, students etc. on all aspects pertaining to age of marriage and motherhood and submitted its report. In its Report, the Task Force had recommended for raising

the age of marriage for women to 21 years, on par with men to promote gender equality in society. This would also enable the girls to complete their education and give them equality of opportunity in employment. This would further enable them to achieve economic independence which would really empower women. The marriage at 21 would enable the girls to achieve physical and psychological maturity which substantially reduces the risk of maternal mortality, low birth weight, infant mortality and child under nutrition. Task Force had also recommended that Government may decide either of the two alternatives for the date of implementation of the amendment viz. (i) two years from the date of notification of the amendment; or (ii) staggered schedule raising age at marriage for girls by one year at a time, starting one year after the notification of the amendment.

The report was examined by the Government and based on the recommendation of the Task Force, the Government has proposed in the draft bill that implementation of the amendment relating to change in age of marriage would take place two years from the date of notification of Act, to provide sufficient time to citizens to prepare for this momentous reform.
