

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3738
TO BE ANSWERED ON 11.08.2023

CHILD MARRIAGES

3738. MS. CHANDRANI MURMU:

Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has any data to explain the number of child marriages that have taken place across the country during the last five years, if so, the details thereof, State-wise;
- (b) whether there is any increase or decrease in the trend and if so, the reasons therefor;
- (c) the initiatives being taken by the Government to eradicate the practice of child marriage; and
- (d) the main regions and communities where child marriage is rampant?

ANSWER

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

(a) & (b): 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 information available with NCRB, the number of cases registered under 'the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, (PCMA), 2006' during the last five years i.e. 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 are 395, 501, 523, 785 and 1050 respectively. However, 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 by the Government and better enforcement of law by States/ UTs. The State-wise details of child marriage registered under PCMA, 2006 is at **Annexure**.

(c): The Government has enacted 'the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006' (PCMA) in order to curb child marriages and to take punitive actions against those associated with child marriages. Section 16 of Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) authorises the State Government to appoint for the whole State, or such part there of 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.

'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.

Nevertheless, the Central Government 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. The Ministry has also written to all States/ UTs to increase the number of CMPOs, as presence of Statutory Officer at local levels would result in even more effective public engagement on the subject and prevention of solemnisation of child marriage. Further, the Ministry of Women and Child Development implements the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) component under the umbrella scheme 'Mission Shakti', wherein creation of awareness 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 has introduced 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, Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs), District Child Protection Units etc.

(d): Instances have come to the notice that some sections of society continue to indulge in the practice of child marriage in the name of custom, practices and/ or religious beliefs etc. In some cases, writ petitions have also been filed before Hon'ble Courts of law for upholding the validity of marriage of a minor girl on these grounds under personal laws. 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 proposed 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 since been referred to Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports for examination.

Further, since enactment of PCMA, the prevalence of child marriage has reduced by half from 47% in 2006 to 23.3% during 2019-21 (NFHS-5). However, a few States such as Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Telangana, Tripura and West Bengal have higher prevalence of child marriage than national average as per NFHS-5.

Annexure

ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PART (a) & (b) OF THE LOK SABHA UN-STARRED QUESTION NO.3738 FOR ANSWER ON 11.08.2023 ASKED BY MS. CHANDRANI MURMU REGARDING 'CHILD MARRIAGES'

The State-wise details of child marriage registered under PCMA, 2006 during the last five years i.e. 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

SL	State/UT	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
		CR	CR	CR	CR	CR
1	Andhra Pradesh	15	14	4	32	19
2	Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	0	0	0
3	Assam	58	88	115	138	155
4	Bihar	17	35	8	5	11
5	Chhattisgarh	1	2	0	1	0
6	Goa	0	0	0	0	0
7	Gujarat	6	8	20	15	12
8	Haryana	18	21	20	33	33
9	Himachal Pradesh	5	9	4	5	5
10	Jharkhand	1	7	3	3	4
11	Karnataka	65	73	111	184	273
12	Kerala	15	18	7	8	12
13	Madhya Pradesh	5	3	4	5	4
14	Maharashtra	20	13	20	50	82
15	Manipur	0	0	0	0	2
16	Meghalaya	0	0	0	0	0
17	Mizoram	0	0	0	0	0
18	Nagaland	0	0	0	0	0
19	Odisha	17	22	22	24	64
20	Punjab	8	6	6	13	8
21	Rajasthan	6	11	19	3	11
22	Sikkim	0	0	0	0	0
23	Tamil Nadu	55	67	46	77	169
24	Telangana	25	24	35	60	57
25	Tripura	1	1	0	4	1
26	Uttar Pradesh	4	4	4	12	6
27	Uttarakhand	1	2	2	9	12
28	West Bengal	49	70	68	98	105
	TOTAL STATE(S)	392	498	518	779	1045
29	A&N Islands	0	0	0	0	0
30	Chandigarh	2	2	1	1	0
31	D&N Haveli and Daman & Diu+	0	0	1	0	0
32	Delhi	1	1	2	4	2
33	Jammu & Kashmir*	0	0	1	1	2
34	Ladakh				0	0
35	Lakshadweep	0	0	0	0	0
36	Puducherry	0	0	0	0	1
	TOTAL UT(S)	3	3	5	6	5
	TOTAL (ALL INDIA)	395	501	523	785	1050

Source: Crime in India