NFHS

4157. DR. PRITAM GOPINATHRAO MUNDE:
SHRI CHANDRA SEKHAR SAHU:

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

(a) whether a child bride is more than doubly prone to health problems than a
grown-up woman and as per WHO report, 11 percent of the births worldwide are
among adolescents, they account for 23 per cent of the overall burden of
diseases, if so, the facts thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto;
(b) whether the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2015-16 also showed that
26.8 percent women are married off before they turned 18, if so, whether
currently child marriages are valid in India;
(c) whether there is a proposal to amend section 3 of the Prohibition of Child
Marriage Act, under which a child marriage is only voidable at the option of the
contracting parties and to amend the law that allows child marriage to continue; and
(d) if so, the details thereof and the time by which it will be finalized?

ANSWER

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

(a) : Yes, Sir. As per Sixty Fifth World Health Assembly Report, child marriage
makes girls far more vulnerable to the profound health risks of early pregnancy and
childbirth. Further, as per the report, first pregnancy at an early age is risky. Although
births among adolescents account for 11% of all births worldwide, they account for
23% of the overall burden of disease (in terms of disability adjusted life years) due to
pregnancy and childbirth among women of all ages. In low and middle income
countries, complications of pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death in
women aged 15–19 years.

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya
Karyakram (RKS) in 2014 to reach out to 253 million adolescents. One of the six key
components of the RKS is Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) which includes
awareness generation and information provision for averting early marriage and
teenage pregnancies using community and facility level interventions.

(b) : As per the data provided by National Family Health Survey (2015-16), 26.8% 
women are married before reaching the age of 18 years. As per Section 3 of ‘The
Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006’, every marriage contracted between a male
aged below 21 years of age and female aged below 18 years of age is voidable at the
option of the contracting parties, if they approach the court before attaining two years
of majority.

(c) & (d) : The Government of India has initiated Inter-Ministerial consultation for
considering amendments in ‘The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006’. However,
finalising the proposal of amendment requires careful consideration and consultation
with all stakeholders.