

# Child marriages have halved since the introduction of law preventing them: Women and Child Development Ministry

We must also focus on raising awareness because legislation alone cannot eradicate this issue: Women and Child Development Minister Annapurna Devi

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THE HINDU BUREAU



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**Child marriages in India halved from 47.4 % to 23.3 % in 2019-21 since the introduction of the Prevention of Child Marriage Act in 2006, Union Women and Child Development Minister Annapurna Devi said New Delhi on Wednesday (November 27, 2024).**

The Minister said that around two lakh child marriages had been prevented in the past one year, even as one in five girls in India is married before reaching the legal age of 18 years.

Recent reports by the United Nations note that, globally, the most significant decline in child marriage rates have been observed in South Asian countries, India being a significant contributor, Ms. Devi said in her address while launching the **Bal Vivah Mukta Bharat Abhiyan (child marriage-free India campaign)** here.

However, despite the progress, she cautioned, there is no room for complacency.

The 'Bal Vivah Mukta Bharat' campaign will focus on the seven States with high burden of child marriages — West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Tripura, Assam, and Andhra Pradesh — and nearly 300 high-burden districts where child marriage rates are high compared with the national average. The campaign will call on every State and Union Territory to devise an action plan aimed at reducing the child marriage rates below 5% by 2029.

A key feature of the campaign is the launch of the 'Child Marriage Free Bharat' portal, a platform to raise awareness, report cases, and monitor progress.

"Guided by the past experiences of BBBP [Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao or 'save daughter, educate daughter' Programme] and the recent judgement of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, the Bal Vivah Mukta Bharat campaign aims to bring all stakeholders together, to spread awareness up to the grassroots and bring attitudinal change towards ending child marriage," Ms. Devi said.

The Minister said that while laws, including the Prevention of Child Marriage Act were instrumental, "we must also focus on raising awareness because legislation alone cannot eradicate this issue".

Ms. Devi said that child marriage is not an isolated challenge that can be resolved with a single solution. "It requires a whole of government approach — right from ensuring continuity in girls' education, to skilling and absorption in the labour force, to ensuring nutritional outcomes for women, women's reproductive health and overall health, women's safety and security, including anti-trafficking, social protection, sports and leadership, amongst others," she said.

“We cannot stop until India is completely free of child marriages,” she said, calling for active participation from citizens.

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