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# BREAKING THE CHAINS: ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE IN INDIA

## WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Union Minister for Women and Child Development, Smt. Annapurna Devi, recently launched the '**Bal Vivah Mukta Bharat**' (Child Marriage Free India) campaign, marking a significant step toward eradicating child marriage and empowering young girls across the nation. As part of the initiative, a dedicated Child Marriage Free Bharat Portal was introduced to monitor and support efforts against child marriage. The event also included a nationwide pledge to combat this social issue and raise awareness about its harmful effects. This mission reflects the government's strong commitment to ensuring the safety, education, and well-being of every child in India.



## CHILD MARRIAGE TRENDS IN INDIA

**1. Overall Decline in Child Marriage:** The prevalence of child marriage reduced from 47.4% in 2005–06 to 26.8% in 2015–16, registering a sharp decline of 21 percentage points in a decade. Between 2015–16 and 2019–21, child marriage further declined by 3.5 percentage points, reaching 23.3%.

**2. Age at Marriage:** The median age of first marriage for women (aged 20–49) increased from 17.2 years in 2005–06 to 19.2 years in 2019–21. For men (aged 25–29), the median age rose from 22.6 years to 24.9 years during the same period.

**3. Trends Among Younger Women:** Among women aged 18–19 years, the prevalence of child marriage declined from 37.7% in 2005–06 to 16.3% in 2019–21, indicating a continued downward trend.

#### **4. Socio-Economic and Educational Differentials**

**Education:** 48% of girls with no education were married before 18, compared to only 4% of girls with higher education. Each additional year of education increases the age at marriage by 0.36 years.

**Economic Status:** 40% of girls from the lowest wealth quintile were married before 18, while only 8% from the highest quintile faced the same fate.

**Caste and Religion:** Higher prevalence among Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) (26%), though the gap is narrowing. Lower rates among Christians, Muslims, and other minority religious groups compared to Hindus.

**5. State-Wise Variations:** West Bengal, Bihar, and Tripura (over 40% of women aged 20–24 married before 18). Other states with a high prevalence of child marriages include Jharkhand, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Telangana.

**6. Predictive Indicators:** Girls with lower education levels are 15.5 times more likely to marry before 18. Women from the poorest wealth quintile have 1.5 times higher odds of child marriage compared to the richest quintile. Rural residents and certain caste groups, such as Scheduled Tribes, face higher odds of child marriage.

### **GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO REDUCE CHILD MARRIAGES IN INDIA**

**Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006:** Strictly prohibits marriages involving girls below 18 years and boys below 21 years. Imposes severe penalties on violators and provides a legal framework to prevent and address cases of child marriage.

**Sukanya Samridhi Yojana:** Encourage families to save for their daughters' education and future, reducing economic pressures that often lead to early marriages.

**Child Marriage Free Bharat Campaign:** Raise awareness, empower communities, and create a supportive ecosystem to eliminate child marriages.

**Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme:** The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme is a comprehensive initiative aimed at promoting gender equality, empowering girls, and tackling the issue of child marriage.

**CHILDLINE (1098):** It is the service that coordinates with local authorities, such as the police, Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs), and District Child Protection Units (DCPU), to respond swiftly and effectively to child marriage cases.

**National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR):** The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) plays an essential role in addressing the issue of child marriage through collaboration and advocacy.

**Child Welfare Committees (CWC):** They consist of representatives from the police, civil society organizations, and government agencies. They conduct awareness campaigns and encourage States/UTs to implement preventive actions, particularly during important cultural events like Akshay Tiritiya.

**Awareness Campaigns and Media Outreach:** The government conducts regular awareness campaigns, media outreach, and community programs to inform the public about the dangers of child marriage and promote social change.

**Stakeholder Collaboration and State-Level Coordination:** To effectively combat child marriages, the government works in close collaboration with local governments, civil society organizations, and community leaders.



## CAUSES OF CHILD MARRIAGES

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### 1. Poverty

**Economic Pressure:** Poverty-stricken families marry off daughters early to reduce financial burdens or gain monetary benefits through dowries.

**Mass Marriages:** Economically weaker families organize mass marriages to minimize expenses, often resulting in child marriages.

**Trafficking Risks:** Some families, knowingly or unknowingly, marry off young daughters in exchange for one, leading to trafficking and exploitation.

**2. Dowry System:** The customary dowry practice compels families to marry daughters at a younger age, as younger brides often require lower dowries.

**3. Patriarchy:** Power Imbalance: Deeply entrenched patriarchal norms deprive women of decision-making rights, including their marriage. Male Domination: Marriage decisions, including timing and spouse selection, are often made by fathers or male elders, sidelining women's autonomy.

### 4. Sexuality and Virginitv Concerns

**Family Honor:** The emphasis on preserving virginity and family honor prompts parents to marry daughters early.

**Protection from Advances:** Early marriage is seen as a safeguard against "improper" behavior or unwanted sexual advances.

**Burden on Parents:** Parents view daughters as a "burden" to be relieved through early marriage.

**5. Cultural and Social Myths:** Beliefs such as attaining salvation through early marriage or curing diseases (like AIDS) through intercourse with virgins perpetuate the practice.

**6. Caste Hierarchy: Preservation of Caste:** Child marriage ensures that individuals marry within their caste to uphold hereditary caste norms and avoid inter-caste unions.

## IMPACTS OF CHILD MARRIAGES

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**Reproductive and Sexual Health Risks:** Child brides face high rates of obstetric complications, such as pregnancy-induced hypertension and premature delivery. They are more likely to experience fetal wastage (miscarriages or stillbirths) and higher rates of maternal and infant mortality.

**Maternal Mortality and Morbidity:** Adolescent mothers are at double the risk of dying due to pregnancy related complications. Frequent pregnancies, malnutrition, and lack of proper healthcare contribute to a high maternal mortality rate.



**Infant Mortality and Morbidity:** Infants born to adolescent mothers have a higher risk of premature birth, low birth weight, and poor growth. The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) is significantly higher for adolescent mothers compared to adult mothers.

**Limited Family Planning and Contraceptive Use:** Contraceptive use is very low among adolescent mothers, leading to frequent pregnancies and related complications. Many young women face unmet contraceptive needs, resulting in unplanned pregnancies and unsafe abortions.

**Lesser Autonomy for Girls:** Child brides have less control over health, household decisions, and financial matters. They face restrictions on mobility and decision-making, impacting their ability to access healthcare and education.

**Lack of Exposure and Information:** Child brides are often isolated and lack access to important information about reproductive health and contraception. Many are not exposed to any form of media, further limiting their awareness of rights and available support.

**Increased Susceptibility to Gender-Based Violence:** Child brides are more likely to experience physical or sexual abuse. A significant number of young women justify abuse, and many are exposed to violence in their marriages.

**Sexual Exploitation and Abuse:** Early marriage exposes girls to sexual exploitation and abuse by their husbands and others in their marital homes. Child brides face increased health risks, including trauma from early sexual activity, pregnancy, and childbirth.

**Child Trafficking:** Child marriage is linked to trafficking, where young girls are sold or trafficked for sexual exploitation or bonded labor. In some regions, girls are married off young and then trafficked to other areas for forced prostitution or labor.

**Social and Economic Disadvantages:** Child marriages restrict girls' opportunities for education and economic independence. They are more likely to experience poverty, limited opportunities, and social exclusion throughout their lives.

#### **EFFECTIVE WAYS TO END CHILD MARRIAGE IN INDIA:**

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**Empower Girls with Education:** Education empowers girls to break the cycle of child marriage. By providing access to quality education, girls gain the skills and confidence to make informed choices about their futures.

**Promote Gender Equality:** Achieving gender equality is key to ending child marriage. Challenging harmful gender norms and stereotypes helps create a society where girls are valued equally to boys.

**Encourage Supportive Laws and Child Protection Policies:** Strong legal frameworks and child protection policies are vital. Advocating for and enforcing laws against child marriage ensures that children's rights are upheld in practice.

**Educate and Spread Awareness About Child Marriage:** Awareness campaigns are essential to bring about change. Educating communities about the harmful effects of child marriage can encourage them to reject this practice.

**Support the Development of Adolescent Girls:** Focusing on the physical and emotional well-being of adolescent girls helps prevent child marriage. Programs aimed at their overall development equip them to make independent decisions.

**Educate Parents About Child Marriage:** Parents are often the decision-makers in child marriages. Workshops and awareness sessions for parents highlight the detrimental long-term effects of early marriage on their daughters.

**Report Child Marriages:** Community involvement is crucial in preventing child marriage. Reporting any incidents of child marriage ensures that authorities can intervene and take immediate action.

**Refuse Participation in Events Promoting Child Marriage:** It is important to stand against child marriage by refusing to take part in events that promote or support it. Every individual action counts towards eradicating this harmful practice.

**Collaborate with NGOs to Prevent Child Marriage:** NGOs play a vital role in preventing child marriage by providing resources, support, and guidance. Collaborating with such organizations strengthens efforts to create a safer environment for children.

**Proactive Role of the Government:** The government must enforce laws against child marriage, monitor age requirements, and conduct awareness campaigns. Programs like “Beti Bachao Beti Padhao” have been successful in raising awareness at the grassroots level.



### **CONCLUSION:**

Child marriage is not only a barrier to a girl’s dreams and aspirations but also a violation of fundamental human rights and constitutional principles. It is a crime against both the individual and society, hindering progress and development. In a progressing society like India, it is essential to eliminate child marriage, as it deprives girls of their right to education, health, and empowerment. By ending this harmful practice, we can allow girls to reach their true economic, political, and social potential, contributing to the advancement of the nation as a whole.

### **PRELIMS QUESTION**

**Q. With reference to the legislation related to child marriages in India, consider the following statements:**

1. Har Bilas Sarda is best known for the introduction of the Child Marriage Restraint Act (1929).
2. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, of 2006, allows for the nullification of child marriages and mandates the return of all valuables if a marriage is voided.
3. The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021, seeks to equalize the marriage age for men and women by raising it to 21 years.

**How many of the above statements are correct?**

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

**ANSWER: C**

### MAINS QUESTION:

Assess the effectiveness of civil society organizations and charitable trusts in addressing the issue of child marriage in India. How do their interventions complement government efforts?

(Answer in 250 words)

Munde Dhananjay Navnath

## INDIA AND BANGLADESH: A PARTNERSHIP FOR REGIONAL STABILITY

### WHY IN THE NEWS?

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Pranay Verma, stated that India is committed to maintaining a stable, positive, and constructive relationship with Bangladesh, where the people of both nations are the primary beneficiaries. He made these remarks while discussing India-Bangladesh relations at the Bay of Bengal Conversation, an event organized by the Centre for Governance Studies in Dhaka.



### INDIA-BANGLADESH COOPERATION:

- 1. Defence Cooperation:** India and Bangladesh engage in joint military exercises like Sampriti and Maitree, enhancing border and maritime security, and counterterrorism efforts, particularly in the Bay of Bengal.
- 2. Economic Cooperation:** India is one of Bangladesh's largest trading partners, with bilateral trade surpassing \$18 billion in 2023. India exports machinery, chemicals, and agricultural products, while Bangladesh exports textiles and garments. India also invests in infrastructure and technology sectors.
- 3. Strategic and Regional Cooperation:** India and Bangladesh collaborate in regional forums such as SAARC, BIMSTEC, and BBIN, focusing on South Asian stability, counterterrorism, and connectivity.
- 4. Cultural Cooperation:** The two nations share cultural ties, marked by joint film festivals, academic exchanges, and commemorations of the 1971 Liberation War. Cultural diplomacy strengthens their historical and familial bonds.

**5. Technological and Scientific Cooperation:** India assists Bangladesh in space technology, biotechnology, and IT infrastructure, with collaborative projects in agriculture, healthcare, and disaster management, including support from ISRO.

**6. Energy Cooperation:** India exports 1,160 MW of electricity to Bangladesh and both countries explore renewable energy projects and strengthen gas pipeline connectivity.

**7. Connectivity and Infrastructure:** Key projects like the Akhaura-Agartala rail link and Mongla Port enhance cross-border transport, facilitating smoother trade and people movement.

#### **SIGNIFICANCE OF BANGLADESH FOR INDIA:**

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**1. Important Trade Partners:** Bangladesh is India's largest trade partner in South Asia, while India stands as the second-largest trade partner of Bangladesh in Asia. In 2023-24, bilateral trade between the two countries reached USD 14.01 billion, reflecting the strong economic ties and growing trade relations between them.

**2. Security and Border Management:** India and Bangladesh collaborate closely on security issues, including police cooperation, anti-corruption efforts, and tackling illicit drug trafficking, fake currency, and human trafficking. They also work together to secure their 4,096 km border with initiatives such as border fencing and joint boundary pillar inspections, ensuring effective border management and enhancing security for both nations.

**3. Peaceful Resolution of Border Issues:** The Land Boundary Agreement (2015) and Maritime Boundary Delimitation exemplify the peaceful resolution of territorial disputes between the countries.

**4. Sub-Regional Cooperation:** Both countries share a common vision for the Indo-Pacific, focusing on maritime security and the development of the ocean economy.

**5. Multilateral Engagement:** India and Bangladesh actively engage in various multilateral platforms, such as SAARC, BIMSTEC, BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal), and IORA.

**6. Enhanced Connectivity:** Initiatives like the Protocol on Inland Waterways Trade and Transit (PIWTT) and the use of Chittagong and Mongla Ports have significantly improved connectivity between the two countries.

**7. Cultural and People-to-People Relations:** The Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre and the Indian Cultural Centre in Dhaka play a key role in promoting the shared cultural heritage and strengthening people-to-people ties.

**8. Defence Cooperation:** Military exercises such as SAMPRITI and MILAN highlight the active defence cooperation between the two nations.

#### **SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA FOR BANGLADESH:**

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**1. Internal Connectivity:** India plays a key role in enhancing Bangladesh's internal connectivity, offering easier access to India's North-Eastern states. A prominent example is the Akhaura-Agartala cross-border rail link, which improves transportation and trade.

**2. Regional Integration:** Bangladesh is centrally located in India's strategic frameworks, including the Neighbourhood First Policy, Act East Policy, Vision SAGAR, and Indo-Pacific Vision, making it a key partner for regional integration.

**3. Support for India's Regional Leadership:** Bangladesh contributes to India's regional leadership vision by helping counter China's assertive presence in the region, fostering greater geopolitical balance.

**4. Developmental Partnership:** Over the past 8 years, India has extended nearly US\$ 8 billion in Lines of Credit (LOC) to Bangladesh, supporting its infrastructure and development projects.

**5. Human Resource Development:** India provides training for Bangladesh's Civil Service and police officials, strengthening governance and institutional capacity in Bangladesh.

**6. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR):** India has been a key partner in humanitarian assistance, notably through initiatives like Vaccine Maitri, where India supplied COVID-19 vaccines to Bangladesh during the pandemic, demonstrating its commitment to regional welfare.



## RECENT DEVELOPMENT CONSEQUENCE:

- 1. Political Transition in Bangladesh:** Bangladesh's political uncertainty raises concerns about the future of ongoing projects. Despite this, India remains Bangladesh's key development partner, essential for economic stability and regional connectivity.
- 2. Connectivity as a Cornerstone of Bilateral Ties:** Connectivity remains a critical component of India Bangladesh relations, with key projects like the Akhaura-Agartala rail link, Bhutan rail connectivity, and energy initiatives such as the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline strengthening their partnership.
- 3. Trade and Energy Cooperation:** India is Bangladesh's largest trading partner, with established connectivity channels facilitating trade. Energy collaborations, such as the Maitree Thermal Power Plant and SASEC HVDC grid projects, support Bangladesh's energy security.
- 4. Digital Connectivity and Future Plans:** The India-Bangladesh Digital Partnership aims to boost 4G/5G rollout and contribute to Bangladesh's Smart Bangladesh 2041 plan, enhancing digital infrastructure for economic growth.
- 5. Resilience During Political Instability:** Despite the political upheaval, economic interdependence and established connectivity allowed for the swift reopening of the Petrapole-Benapole land port, ensuring a quick return to normalcy in trade.
- 6. Need for Continuity in Bilateral Cooperation:** To maintain stability and growth, both countries must ensure the continuity of key projects like the BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement and the Katihar-Parbatipur Bornagar transmission line.
- 7. India's Role in Regional Stability:** India's extensive connectivity initiatives help foster regional stability, supporting Bangladesh's goal to achieve developing country status by 2026, with India being a crucial development partner.
- 8. Regional Integration through Connectivity:** Shared initiatives like BIMSTEC and BBIN are vital for enhancing trade, energy, and transport links across South Asia, and strengthening regional integration and stability.

## WAY FORWARD:

- 1. Sustaining Connectivity Projects:** Ensuring the timely completion and operationalization of ongoing projects such as the Akhaura-Agartala rail link and the Katihar-Parbatipur-Bornagar electricity transmission line will significantly enhance bilateral connectivity, trade, and regional integration.
- 2. Strengthening Energy Cooperation:** Expanding energy projects, including the construction of the Rooppur Nuclear Plant and joint efforts to explore renewable energy, will further enhance Bangladesh's energy security and economic growth.
- 3. Digital Partnership:** Prioritizing the India-Bangladesh Digital Partnership will allow both nations to leverage digital technologies for economic growth, improve cross-border data exchange, and support the development of Smart Bangladesh.
- 4. Enhanced Multilateral Engagement:** Both nations should continue to work within regional frameworks like BIMSTEC and BBIN, ensuring stable regional security, connectivity, and prosperity and addressing challenges like counterterrorism and climate change.
- 5. Human Resource and Disaster Management Cooperation:** Strengthening training programs for Bangladesh's civil service and police, alongside joint disaster relief efforts, will ensure effective governance and resilience during crises.
- 6. Continuity in Development Partnership:** India should continue to play a key role in Bangladesh's development by extending further Lines of Credit (LOC), supporting infrastructure, and providing technical expertise across sectors like transport, healthcare, and agriculture.



## CONCLUSION

India and Bangladesh share a dynamic, multifaceted relationship marked by strategic, economic, and cultural ties. Despite political transitions in Bangladesh, the strong connectivity, trade, and development cooperation between the two nations continue to serve as a pillar for stability in South Asia. The deepening of these partnerships, especially in energy, digital infrastructure, and regional cooperation, will be crucial in realizing the full potential of their bilateral and regional aspirations. Both countries must prioritize continuity in cooperation to ensure long-term growth, security, and regional stability.

## PRELIMS QUESTION:

**Q. With reference to India-Bangladesh relations, which of the following statements is/are correct?**

1. India is Bangladesh's largest trading partner in South Asia, with bilateral trade reaching USD 14.01 billion in 2023-24.
2. India is not involved in any energy projects with Bangladesh, particularly in nuclear energy.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

**Answer: A**

## MAINS QUESTION:

**Q. Despite political instability in Bangladesh, India has maintained a strong developmental partnership with the country. How have India's infrastructure, energy, and digital connectivity projects contributed to Bangladesh's economic stability and growth? (250 words, 15 marks)**

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**CHEMISTRY**  
**CRASH COURSE**

STARTING FROM **14<sup>th</sup>** DECEMBER 2024

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