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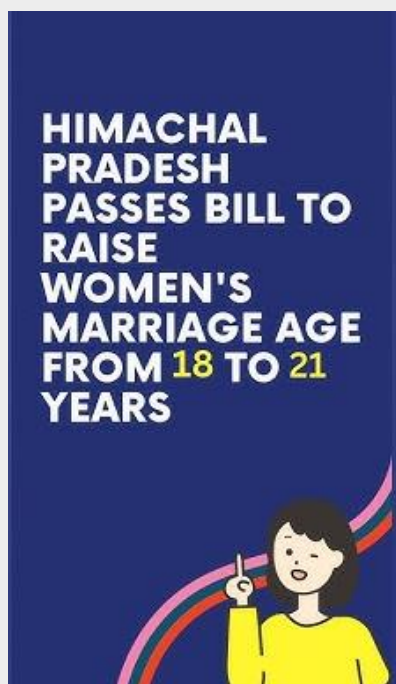
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## 1. Himachal Pradesh passes Bill to raise women's marriage age from 18 to 21 years: What happens next?

### Why in News?

The Himachal Pradesh Assembly recently passed a Bill to raise the minimum age of marriage for women from 18 to 21 years. The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Himachal Pradesh Amendment) Bill, 2024, was passed by voice vote. The Bill amended the Prohibition of Child Marriage (PCM) Act, which was passed by Parliament in 2006.

What amendments has the Bill introduced to the PCM Act? How will the Bill's amendments to a central law come into force?



### Why did the Himachal Pradesh Assembly pass the Bill?

The Himachal Pradesh State Health, Social Justice, and Empowerment Minister said it was necessary to raise the minimum age of marriage for women to provide opportunities to them.

The minister also highlighted that early marriage and motherhood often severely impact the health of women. According to the 'Statement of Objects and Reasons' provided with the Bill, "The early marriages...act as a hindrance not only in the progress of their (women's) career but also in their physical development."

### What amendments has the Bill introduced to the PCM Act?

As it stands, Section 2(a) of the PCM Act defines a "child" as someone "who, if male, has not completed twenty-one years of age, and if a female, has not completed eighteen years of age". The Himachal Bill eliminates this distinction on the basis of age between "males" and "females". It defines a "child" as "a male or female who has not completed twenty-one years of age".

The Bill also amends Section 2(b) of the PCM Act, which defines "child marriage" as "a marriage to which either of the contracting parties is a child". The Bill has added a clause giving it overriding effect over "anything contrary or inconsistent therewith contained in any other law...including any custom or usage or practice governing the parties".

This means that the new marriage age for women will apply to everyone in Himachal Pradesh regardless of what any other law may state, or even if the religious or cultural practices of the individuals getting married allow legal minors to get married. The Bill introduces Section 18A to the PCM Act, which gives the same overriding effect to the entire central law and its provisions.

The Bill increases the time-period for filing a petition to annul a marriage. Under Section 3 of the PCM Act, the “contracting party who was a child at the time of the marriage” can file a petition to annul the marriage within two years of attaining majority (before they turn 20 for women, and 23 for men). The Bill increases this period to five years, allowing both women and men to file petitions to annul the marriage before they turn 23 years old (the minimum age for marriage at 21 years is higher than the age of majority at 18 years).

### **How will the Bill’s amendments to the PCM Act come into force?**

The Concurrent List — or List III under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India — contains a list of subjects that both the central and state governments can pass laws on. Entry 5 of the Concurrent List comprises a number of subjects including “ marriage and divorce; infants and minors;...all matters in respect of which parties in judicial proceedings were immediately before the commencement of this Constitution subject to their personal law”. This allows both the Centre and states to enact laws to address child marriage.

Typically, under Article 200 of the Constitution, a Bill passed by a state Assembly will be handed over to the Governor of that state for her assent. The Governor can then declare that she assents to the Bill (making it a law), return the Bill for reconsideration, or “reserve” it for consideration by the President. The President can then declare that she assents or withholds assent to the Bill, or direct the Governor to send it back for reconsideration.

However, the Bill passed by Himachal Pradesh amends the PCM Act by introducing a different marriage age for women, making it inconsistent with the Act passed by Parliament. Under Article 254(1) of the Constitution, if the state legislature enacts a law dealing with a subject in the Concurrent List and that law is “repugnant” — inconsistent or contradictory — with a central law, then the repugnant portion of the state law will be “void”.

The exception to this is provided under Article 254(2). If the Bill in question is repugnant to an earlier or existing law made by Parliament, the Bill must be reserved for the President’s consideration and needs to receive her assent as per Article 201. Only then can the repugnant provision in the state law be valid. So, for the Himachal Pradesh Bill to come into force, Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla must reserve the Bill for President Droupadi Murmu’s consideration, who must then decide to give her assent to the Bill.

This process was seen in action in the case of Uttarakhand’s Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill, which provided common provisions for subjects such as marriage, divorce, etc. for everyone residing in the state.

These subjects were previously governed by personal laws (enacted by Parliament) and the customs of residents depending on their religious or cultural identity. The Bill passed by the

state Assembly in February became law only after President Murmu gave her assent to it in March.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## 2. Impact of Morality Law on Afghan Women

### Introduction: Regressive Law and Global Outrage

The Taliban's recent announcement of a law on the "Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice" has sparked global outrage. This law imposes the Taliban's strict interpretation of sharia, or Islamic law, on Afghanistan, severely restricting women's rights and regulating many aspects of daily life.



### Key Provisions of the New Law

The 114-page law mandates that women must cover their entire bodies and faces in the presence of unrelated men and prohibits them from raising their voices in public. Men are also subjected to strict regulations, such as growing beards and avoiding Western-style haircuts. The law bans all forms of entertainment, restricts travel during prayer times, and prohibits transporting women without a male guardian. The morality police, known as Muhtasib, are empowered to enforce these rules with discretionary punishment.

### Historical Context: Is This a New Development?

While many of these regulations were already being enforced in Afghanistan, the official codification of these "morality laws" is feared to lead to more brutal punishments. Afghanistan has a history of women's rights being severely restricted under Taliban rule, despite periods of progress in the past.

### Afghan Women's Resistance

Despite the severe restrictions, some Afghan women are defying the new law by singing in public and protesting, while others engage in more subtle forms of resistance, such as running underground schools for girls. These acts of defiance indicate that many women are unwilling to accept the Taliban's draconian measures.

### **International Response**

The international community has condemned the new law, with UN agencies calling it "oppressive" and "utterly intolerable." However, the Taliban's refusal to cooperate with the UN has limited the effectiveness of international pressure. Critics argue that more robust political pressure is needed to make the Taliban respond to global concerns about women's rights. India has also expressed concern, reiterating its support for women's education and the establishment of an inclusive government in Afghanistan.

Relevance: GS Prelims; International Issues

Source: The Hindu

### **3. SJVN Awarded Prestigious Navratna Status by Government of India**

#### **Recognition of Achievement**

SJVN, formerly known as Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam, has been awarded the prestigious Navratna status by the Department of Public Enterprises, making it the 25th company in India to receive this honor. This recognition is a significant milestone in SJVN's 36-year journey.

#### **Leadership Acknowledgment**

Sh. Sushil Sharma, Chairman & Managing Director of SJVN, expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi for his leadership, as well as to Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman and Power Minister Sh. Manohar Lal for their continuous support. He also thanked the Government of Himachal Pradesh for its partnership and support.



### **Benefits of Navratna Status**

Sh. Sharma highlighted that the Navratna status is granted to CPSEs that have demonstrated strong financial performance and managerial efficiency. This status provides SJVN with greater financial and operational autonomy, enabling the company to pursue larger projects, form strategic partnerships, and contribute to India's goal of achieving 500 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030.

### **Expanded Opportunities**

With Navratna status, SJVN can now invest in projects without financial ceilings, accelerating its growth. The company can invest up to 30% of its net worth annually, facilitating its ambitious expansion plans. SJVN also gains the freedom to form joint ventures, establish overseas subsidiaries, and undertake organizational restructuring to optimize operations.

### **SJVN's Growth Journey**

SJVN, which was granted Miniratna status in 2008, has grown into a multi-faceted power entity since its establishment in 1988 as a joint venture between the Government of India and the Government of Himachal Pradesh. The company now manages a project portfolio of 56,802.4 MW, including 13 operational projects with a combined capacity of 2,466.5 MW, and 75 projects under various stages of implementation across hydro, solar, wind, thermal, and transmission sectors.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Economics

Source: Indian Express