

Govt. backs varying ages for girls' marriage

The legislature may have taken a conscious decision to retain the minimum age range for marriage between 15 and 18 for girls considering the socio-economic conditions of the country, the government argued in the Supreme Court on Tuesday.

A Bench of Justices M.B. Lokur and Deepak Gupta questioned the government about the logic behind keeping different minimum ages for marriage under different laws.

"The age of consent varies from the Indian Penal Code to the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act to the Hindu Marriage Act ... What is the logic in keeping different age limits for the marriage of girls," the Bench asked.

The court termed child marriages in the country "not marriages but mirages".

The court had earlier said it was unfortunate that parents drove their minor children into marriage. "It is a hard reality and is unfortunate that most of the child marriages happening in the country are arranged by parents of the girl child. However, to this, there are odd exceptions when a minor boy and girl fall in love and marry on their own," the Bench said. It is hearing a petition filed by an NGO, Independent Thought, challenging Exception 2 to Section 375 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code, which permits "sexual intercourse with a girl child aged between 15 and 18 only on the ground that she is married".

END

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