



# Clarification regarding suggestions received by WCD Ministry on issues related to NRI Marriages

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The Government of India has constituted an Expert Committee to look into the issues and difficulties faced by Indian nationals married to overseas nationals of Indian origin and suggest amendments in existing laws/policies/regulation. This is in light of a large number of complaints by men/women (and their children) who are caught in difficult situations arising out of breakdown of marriages.

The Expert Committee is headed by Justice Arvind Kumar Goel, ex-Chairperson, NRI Commission, Punjab. The members of the Committee include Shri Balwant Singh Ramoowalia, Ex - MP Chairperson, senior officers of Ministries of Women and Child Development (WCD), Home Affairs (MHA), External Affairs (MEA) and Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and Prof. Pam Rajput.

The Expert Committee has held four meetings till date to discuss the issues related to the subject of NRI marriages. WCD Ministry, being the nodal Ministry dealing with issues related to women and children, has been receiving numerous suggestions from a variety of stakeholders including individuals, civil society organizations/institutions on the subject. Some of these suggestions include amendments in certain Acts including the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969; constitution of separate cells in Embassies/Mission abroad to coordinate with local authorities; circulation of Do's and Don'ts on the subject in the affected areas i.e. villages, towns, colleges and educational institutions; pre-marital and marital counselling to be provided through Family Counselling Centres (FFC) constituted by Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB); constitution of meaningful Consular Division to provide legal and financial assistance; registration for marriage to be made compulsory; mother to be made natural guardian of the child and many more such suggestions.

All such suggestions are being forwarded by the WCD Ministry to the Expert Committee for examination. The Expert Committee will take into account all such suggestions and make its recommendations to the government. The recommendations will be examined by the government in consultation with a larger group of stakeholders to decide on future course of action. It is, therefore, clarified that the suggestions forwarded to the Expert Committee by the WCD Ministry is only a part of process so that views of various stakeholders are duly taken into account by the committee. Any news reports mentioning the same as formal and final recommendations of the Ministry are completely misleading and incorrect.

The Ministry has separately asked NCPCR to look into the issue of shared parenting for children whose parents have had a breakdown of marriages. NCPCR has been asked to take up a wide stakeholder consultation on the issue so that social, psychological, legal and other dimensions of this issue could be examined.

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