

Some 'child grooms' are now Bihari babus

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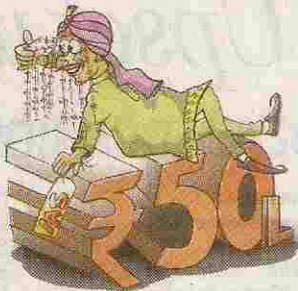
PATNA: Career civil service officers in Bihar command a high dowry. A recent newspaper survey found that IAS *ladkas* fetched between ₹ 40 lakh and ₹ 50 lakh while the going price for IPS officers could be in the region of ₹ 25 lakh to ₹ 40 lakh. The other civil service officers command as per their pecking order in the UPSC list.

But here comes the confirmation.

At a workshop on child marriages, a senior civil servant of the state spilt the beans on how marriages go, while talking on how deep rooted the malaise of child marriages in Bihar was. It was an off-the-cuff remark though.

Chairing one of the technical sessions on the opening day of the two-day state consultation on prevention of child marriage here on Wednesday, managing director of Women Development Corporation N Vijayalakshmi said: "I had heard of child marriages even before coming to Bihar. But here I came to know of the practice of parents of young girls kidnapping boys and marrying them forcibly".

She added: "I know of some IAS officers from Bihar who were kidnapped and married off. Later, on becoming IAS officers they did not continue with their first marriage. I will not take their names because it is their personal matter, but I



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came to know this when I came to the Bihar cadre."

Vijayalakshmi was not alone in taking potshots at bureaucrats from Bihar. Speaking at the same forum, additional director general of police, CID, Rajbardhan Sharma, said: "In the Academy (for IAS and IPS probationers) we all swear not to take dowry, but even

in the court of law people lie under oath..."

The appeal and craze for civil services in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh has been so great, that even in Madhubani, a boy was virtually sold in the 1980s at a bid of ₹ 24 lakh, which was widely reported in the newspapers. The bride was just 15.

An IPS officer married in Begusarai for much the same reason in early 1990s.

It is more often the norm among some upper castes to marry off girls very early, taking it as a status symbol. Many a married IAS and IPS officers have entered matrimony again after dumping their brides of student days to match their later day status.

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The comments had the audience in splits but whether the steel frame takes it sportingly is the big question. The workshop, however, dwelt on the concern that despite all the existing laws the pernicious practice of child marriage continues unabated. There were very few of the civil service officers invited to the workshop, who actually turned up.