

Lok Sabha must dedicate a day to discuss child issues: MP Bhagwanth Khumba

Bharat Yatra highlights the grave need to keep children as a focus for development in India and across the world, says Karnataka's Municipal Minister Eshwara B. Khandre

Bidar, 24th September 2017, Sunday: The [Bharat Yatra](#), led by Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi reached Bidar this weekend on the thirteenth day of the 35-day long march across India.

The Yatra was welcomed by Bidar's District In-charge Minister and Karnataka's Minister of State for Municipalities, Local Bodies and Public Enterprises, Shri Eshwara B. Khandre, who pledged his commitment to the realization of Surakshit Bachpan-Surakshit Bharat. Shri Bhagwanth Khumba, Member of Parliament, representing Bidar in Karnataka, Shri Rahim Khan, Member Legislative Assembly from Bidar, District Collector Dr. HR Mahadev, Dr. R. Silvamani, CEO, Zila Parishad, Bidar, Swami Basalinga Pattadevru, were among the other dignitaries who accorded a grand welcome to the Bharat Yatra.

The march in Bidar, which started from DC Office to Rang Mandir via Baseswar circle, saw the participation of over 3500 youth and dignitaries walk to demand necessary rights for the youngest citizens of our country. Over 3 lakh people have participated in the Yatra across several cities in the first 12 days of Bharat Yatra.

The marchers joined the Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation to call upon the youth of the country to step up and fight for rights of children across India. They strongly urged people of Bidar to strive towards building a safe childhood and a safe India. The spirit shown by Bidar, and its school going children to pledge and join the Bharat Yatra to make India safe for our children is what is needed for the country to take its steps towards combating this growing menace.

MP Shri Bhagwanth Khumba announced that in his support of the Bharat Yatra and the cause of safety and security for children across the country, he will work towards ensuring that the Lok Sabha dedicates at least one day exclusively for discussing laws for protection of children's rights and their implementation in India. **Minister Eshwara Khandre** said, "Bharat Yatra highlights the grave need to keep children as a focus for all development not just in India but across the world. There are strong laws against child sexual abuse and trafficking but merely lawmakers and government officials are not enough. The change must come from the common people as well and we must fight together for the safety of our children."

Present amongst the Yatra marchers, was Alok* (name changed), a child labour survivor who is now 20 years old. Addressing the gathering he said, "My family belongs to a nomadic tribe so nobody in my family had ever gone to school. When I was 5.5-year-old, I was rescued by Kailash Satyarthi Ji during his Shiksha Yatra. He gave me shelter in Bal Ashram and sent me to school. There has been no looking back. I have been a school topper throughout and have also been a college topper. I am now preparing for my law education. With support from Kailash Satyarthi Ji, I have represented India in UN and UNESCO. I got a new lease on life the day I was rescued from child labour."

During the question and answer round that took place at the event, children of Bidar demanded that exclusive time should be earmarked on a periodic basis to discuss children's rights in the state legislative assembly.

Addressing the gathering, **Rear Admiral Rahul Shrawat**, Managing Director, Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation, said, "You will have to break your silence. Child sexual abuse cannot just remain a news item to be covered in the papers. This Bharat Yatra is to shake the conscience of the nation. No nation can progress further unless its children are safe. Like Alok* has shown us, one child rescued can alter the future of an entire generation. This Yatra will ignite the spirit of Kailash Ji's principles in our society and we hope to see 130 crores Kailash Satyarthi's by the time Yatra completes its journey to Delhi"

The Bharat Yatra launched on 11 September at Kanyakumari by Mr Satyarthi is marching across the country to build unprecedented awareness on combating child sexual abuse and trafficking. It is the launch of the

three-year campaign against child rape and child sexual abuse which is aimed at increasing awareness and reporting of the cases, strengthening intuitional response including medical health and compensations, ensuring protection for victims and witnesses during trials and increasing convictions of child sexual abuse in a time bound manner.

Noted child rights activist and national secretary of 'Bachpan Bachao Andolan', Shri Bhuwan Ribhu added, "Many of us would have seen children begging on streets or working, or girls getting teased. If we are not raising our voice against such issues, we are helping the culprits. Today, India is united in saying that we are standing with the children - be it a minister or parliamentarian or district administration or educational institutes, faith leaders, NGOs, citizens – we all are here to share our commitment to create a safe childhood. Law is nothing more than four alphabets on a piece of paper unless it is respected and implemented."

Ever since its launch, Bharat Yatra has been drawing enormous support from citizens across India, including celebrities like Amitabh Bachchan who tweeted to his fans to support the Yatra. People cutting across faith, geography, profession and vocation are coming together to support the Yatra and the creation of a safe India for our children. They are collectively striving for better laws, stronger implementation and faster modes of redressal for victims of abuse and trafficking

Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had sent a personal letter to Kailash Satyarthi extending his support to the Yatra, which will cover 11000 kilometres across 22 States. Some of the key cities it covers include Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Guwahati, Bhopal, Jaipur, Srinagar among others.

At Kanniyakumari during the flag off Mr Satyarthi had declared, "I will not rest till children of this country are not safe. I am not going to stop fighting if the raping and abuse do not stop. I cannot sleep in peace until we win our war against rape and abuse. This moral epidemic haunts our nation, and it is time we fight against it, together."

Re-iterating his mission behind launching the Bharat Yatra, he said "Why am I marching? Because my children are being raped. I refuse to accept that eight children go missing and two are raped every hour. Each time if a single child is in danger, India is in danger. Bharat Yatra is to make India safe again for our children."

Kailash Satyarthi has been campaigning for the freedom, safety and security for children across the globe for the past 36 years. His Nobel Peace Prize (2014) was for his continuous efforts and struggle for the rights children.

About Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation

The Foundation's mission is to create, implement and advocate child-friendly policies that ensure the holistic development and empowerment of children. For achieving these goals, the Foundation encourages government, businesses, civil society as well as children and the youth to participate in strategies and action that will safeguard children from the worst forms of abuse, including lack of education and health. For more information, visit: www.satyarthi.org.in

For more details on the Yatra, contact:

Preeti Rawat

Preeti@thequtenberg.com

Paroma Bhattacharya

paroma@satyarthi.org