

## Bharat Yatra to reach Hyderabad on 21<sup>st</sup> September

**Hyderabad 29th August, Tuesday:** Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi announced that the Bharat Yatra that he will be undertaking to fight child sexual abuse and trafficking, will be reaching Hyderabad on 21<sup>st</sup> of September 2017. The Bharat Yatra will flag off from Kanyakumari on 11<sup>th</sup> September and culminate in New Delhi on 16<sup>th</sup> October.

This Yatra launched to work towards creating an India that is safe for our children, has received whole hearted support from the Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi.

Mr. Satyarthi was hosted at the Press Club Hyderabad, where he told all present, about the rampant problems of child sexual abuse and trafficking in the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh and expressed deep regret at the many cases that have recently come to light about the rape of minors by family members or close friends. He is meeting all faith leaders and scholars in Hyderabad later in the day for collective action to fight against child trafficking and child sexual abuse. Mr. Satyarthi has in the recent met faith leaders in Delhi and in Ajmer seeking their support to fight this menace.

According to the 2015 NCRB report, 99% of the perpetrators who sexually assault children are known to their victims, which makes the crime harder to prevent and detect.

The report also highlights that child marriage is a cause of concern in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana with 3,19,108 girls and 3,21,073 boys being married off before the legal age.

Additionally, between 2013- 2015, the number of missing children that were reported were 17,560. These numbers are merely indicative of the amount of child trafficking that takes place on these states, and that these children are then sold multiple times and forced to endure physical, mental and sexual assault, consistently.

Mr. Satyarthi expressed his concern about the fear that exists in the society to stop victims or their families from speaking up. This fear emboldens the criminals to roam freely and commit more heinous crimes, thereby ruining many lives.

Said Mr. Satyarthi, "I refuse to accept that India remains silent when its children suffer the injustice of violence. How can a country progress if everywhere, its children are in chains? There is a fear of speaking out and a fear of taking a strong stand. This Bharat Yatra will need your voice and your courage of conviction to fight against this growing menace. This is a moral epidemic that is haunting our country and I declare a war on the rape of our daughters and sons"

He then strongly emphasized that journalists can influence the way India reports and understands social issues and that they need to develop both empathy and sensitivity in their writing so that issues like Child Sexual Abuse and Child Trafficking take centre stage in India. He believes that these issues must become a topic of conversation in every household and must ignite the anger and passion in people to come out and demand a change in the mindset of the country.

“As the fourth estate and one of the most influential stakeholders in the country, your writing should inspire youth into action. Your writing should create agents of change who will work tirelessly to ensure that the children of this country are free to live, and that their childhood is a safe and happy one.” he added.

Kailash Satyarthi has been campaigning for the freedom, safety and security for children across the globe for the past 36 years. He has led the historic Global March Against Child Labor in 1998 that prompted the ILO to pass international conventions against the worst form of child labour, in addition to the Shiksha yatra in 2001, after which the Right to Education was included as a fundamental right in the Constitution of India. Mr. Satyarthi has, as a prolific thought leader, played a catalytic role in influencing social and political policies of our country. He won the Nobel Peace prize (2014) for his continuous efforts and struggle for the rights of children.

The Yatra will flag off from Kanyakumari on the 11th of September, from the Vivekananda Memorial, commemorating the anniversary of the great leader’s address at Chicago in 1893.

Mr. Satyarthi and his foundation KSCF have been preparing the ground for several months to launch the Yatra in September. As part of this ground work, Mr Satyarthi has travelled the length and breadth of country meeting citizens, faith leaders, employees and corporates, parliamentarians, social organizations among others, all of whom have pledged their whole-hearted support to the Bharat Yatra, terming it as a necessary fight for our country to embark on and a noble cause to work towards.

The Yatra 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.

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