

North East is most affected by trafficking; we must act now to stop it: Kailash Satyarthi

No child ever should have to go through what I went through, says trafficking survivor

Meghalaya, 23rd September 2017, Saturday: The [Bharat Yatra](#), led by Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi reached Meghalaya on the thirteenth day of the 35-day long march across India. The Yatra has been supported wholeheartedly by Meghalaya Chief Minister, Shri. Mukul Sangma.

The Nobel Peace Laureate and his co-marchers were hosted at the University of Science and Technology by Shri. Zenith Sangma, Sports and Youth Affairs Minister and Mr. Haque, Vice Chancellor, Guwahati University, both of who pledged to join the Bharat Yatra to ensure the realization of Surakshit Bachpan-Surakshit Bharat.

Mr. Satyarthi, addressing a rapt audience of over 3000 students said "North-east is a region which is most affected by trafficking in persons. Child Sexual Abuse and trafficking have grown as an epidemic. In this one hour of the running time of the program, 2 children would have been trafficked, already."

Emphasising on the need to push for a strong anti-trafficking bill, one that will adequately define punishment for the perpetrators and modes of redressal for the victims, the Nobel Peace Laureate added, "I demand for an anti-trafficking bill. I demand for all political parties, for all institutions to help draft and enact a strong law addressing crimes against children. When any discussion of national importance takes place, child-issues are left behind. I demand, child centric political campaigning. I request Mr. Sangma to make children an issue in politics so that we can protect the future of our country".

Present amongst the Yatra marchers, was a survivor. Displaying remarkable courage, Surbhi, (name changed) in her 20's, narrated her story on how she was kidnapped and sold multiple times over. She said it was a traumatising and harrowing experience and she had lost all faith until representatives from the Bachpan Bacaho Aandolan rescued her from the life she was leading. She hopes that the Bharat Yatra will bring about the change it is fighting for as 'no child ever should have to go through what I went through', she said.

According to reports, the percent share of POCSO (Section 4 & 6) cases where perpetrator of sexual assault was known to the survivor stands at 93% in this state.

Additionally, as stated by officials, till July 2017, the Railway protection force has already rescued over 200 minors, mostly victims of trafficking from different areas of the Northeast Frontier Railway zone.

Speaking on how children are the most vulnerable citizens of our country today, Zenith Sangma, Minister, Sports and Youth Affairs, said, "Children are vulnerable and they are the future of our country.

Crimes against children are on a rise and we must be careful in ensuring that we protect the children of India. While we have many laws in the country to protect women and children, Bharat Yatra will raise collective voice to help ensure that there is proper implementation and awareness about these laws"

"Our most valuable resource is our children, and we are unable to protect them from so many heinous crimes. Everyone must contribute RS.1 everyday, through the year for protection of children. My appeal to everyone present here today is that one chapter of the Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation must be present at USTM. We are with you, in your mission to protect children across the country and to make India safe for them and this University will be your partner for building a safe India," added Vice Chancellor, Mr.Haque.

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.

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, including Tamil Nadu. 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.

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.

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