

MAHARASHTRA LAUNCHES STATE CHILD POLICY TO WELCOME BHARAT YATRA

Bring POCSO pendency in state down from 17 years to 17 months, urges the Nobel Peace Laureate

Nerul, Mumbai, 28th September 2017, Thursday: The State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Maharashtra today announced that with the help of UNICEF, the government of Maharashtra is launching a child policy.

Smt. Pankaja Munde, Minister of Rural Development, Women and Child Welfare, Government of Maharashtra, said "We had earlier launched a child helpline and are now launching a Child policy. Our government is very open to feedback and we will keep on amending it based on the emerging needs. Kailash ji is doing this Bharat Yatra to bring this very issue into the public conscience and I have deep respect for Kailash Satyarthi ji's steadfast commitment and dedication to creating a safe childhood. If a girl child is educated, an entire generation is impacted positively through education and livelihoods. Child trafficking has become the largest organised crime in the world. Society and government need to work together to help such survivors heal their mental and physical trauma. It is imperative to have many more such Bharat Yatras and I will pray that Kailash ji's initiative brings about a change in the mass attitudes towards these issues and more and more people join this cause to create a safe childhood."

Said the Nobel Peace Laureate, "I have always known Pankaja ji as a brave woman but I am also happy to see her passion about the cause of child abuse and trafficking. Our Yatras in the past have helped ratify global laws on child labor and make education a fundamental right, but this Yatra is different – We are fighting against fear, silence, apathy and inertia. Child sexual abuse is often considered a social taboo where even the parents often ask children to stay silent. We need to synergize efforts across departments to tackle this challenge – it cannot just remain a child labor or juvenile justice issue. Our country is celebrating Navratra and Durga Puja. This is the great land of Shivaji who admonished his own army for kidnapping women & children. Today, we have become the land where fathers are raping their own daughters. We will burn big effigies of Ravana in a few days to celebrate Dussehra, but the Ravan has entered our buses, schools, minds and societies. If you are in the government in any capacity, you have a moral and social responsibility – just save one generation of Maharashtra and I promise that the subsequent generations will take care of themselves.

Emphasising on the high pendency of cases, Mr. Satyarthi added, "Maharashtra has nearly 4800 of the total 15000 cases of POCSO. There is a 90% pendency of such cases across India. If no other cases are added in the state, Maharashtra will still need 17 years to dispose of the existing POCSO cases. After this great welcome you have accorded to the Bharat Yatra, I demand that you should bring this pendency down to 17 months or lesser. With such able and committed leaders and bureaucrats, I am sure you can do it. Each one of us needs to rise above the 'chalta hai' attitude to deal with the rising incidence of child sexual abuse and trafficking - this will be our true service to Mother India. We have also launched a Parliamentarians Back to School Campaign – I urge Padmaja ji, education minister, all bureaucrats and politicians to visit their schools as common citizens and without prior announcement. This will not only further the cause of Swachh Bharat but also Swachh Mann which will help create a safe childhood."

Earlier in the day, DAV Public School, Nerul hosted the Nobel Peace Laureate and his co-marchers for the Mumbai stretch of the Bharat Yatra.

The Nobel Peace Laureate and the marchers were received by Shri. Prabodh Mahajan, Vice President, DAVCMC, Shri. Mahesh Chopra, Treasurer, DAVCMC and the faculty and students at DAV School.

The Yatra launched by Mr. Kailash Satyarthi on 11 September, reached Nerul, on 28th September. It is the eighteenth day of the 35-day long march across the country to build unprecedented awareness on combating child sexual abuse and trafficking.

Citizens of Nerul along with the Foundation raised their voices against the injustice meted out to children in our country. They called upon the youth of the country to fight against child sexual abuse and trafficking to make India safe for children.

Said Prabodh Mahajan, Hon VP, DAVCMC, "We are very proud that you gave us this privilege. Your Bachpan Bachao Andolan is very dear to our heart. When the first DAV was set up in Lahore in 1886, Swami Dayanand envisioned the extraordinary human being, who has the power to say and hear the truth, who speaks sweetly, who fights against injustice. Take child education to every village. When one girl studies, the entire family gets impacted."

Emphasising on the relationship between parent and It's imperative that parents spend quality time with kids. It's the teacher's responsibility to make sure the kids are groomed to be good human beings. For this, one needs to be a good human being themselves. we wish the best for the Bharat Yatra"

Union Home Minister, Shri. Rajnath Singh, has given his assurance on passing the anti-trafficking law, which aligns with one of the key demands of the Bharat Yatra.

Ever since its launch, Bharat Yatra has been drawing enormous support from citizens across India, including Amitabh Bachchan who tweeted to his fans to support the Yatra. Earlier, Union Minister for Shipping and Finance Mr Pon Radhakrishnan had flagged off the Yatra from Kanyakumari along with Mr Satyarthi. In Trivandrum, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan assured whole hearted support from his government in eradicating the menace of child sexual abuse and trafficking.

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 Karnataka. Some of the key cities it covers include Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Guwahati, Bhopal, Jaipur, Srinagar among others.

The Karnataka High court will pay special attention to POCSO cases so the children can get justice. The Yatra was also supported by Andhra Pradesh and Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu walked with the Foundation to promote awareness about the cause. He also announced that the state of Andhra Pradesh would house a global policy institute dedicated to the well-being and security of children across the country.

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

Support the Bharat Yatra through - <http://ket.to/bharatyatra>

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