

Bihar government announces campaign against child marriage
Aligns with Surakshit Bachpan-Surakshit Bharat

Samastipur, 30th September 2017, Saturday: The [Bharat Yatra](#), launched by Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi on 11 September, reached Samastipur on 30th September, the twentieth day of the 35-day long march across the country to build unprecedented awareness on combating child sexual abuse and trafficking.

The Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation and the marchers were received Shri Anil Sharma, Labour Superintendent, Samastipur and Shri. Pranav Kumar, District Magistrate, Samastipur

The citizens of Samastipur 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 the city to strive towards building a safe childhood and a safe India. The spirit shown by Samastipur, and its youth 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.

District Magistrate, Pranav Kumar said, "Surakshit Bachpan covers a wide range of violence against children, where children should be free to live and we appeal to all the citizens of Samastipur to come forward and report about any issues of abuse, sexual assault, marriage against children and stop all forms of labour. On the 2nd of October, we will launch a mega campaign against the menace of child marriage. Children are such a vulnerable section of society, and it is your duty to protect them. We have laws to act as deterrents to perpetrators, I urge people to do their part in reporting these crimes so that policing can be done and justice can be served"

The Bihar government's announcement aligns with a key component of the Bharat Yatra and its demand for the safety and security of the children of this country. Child marriage is a growing menace, which deeply affects children as they are neither physically or mentally developed enough to enter the institution of marriage.

Mr. Satyarthi had, at an earlier date spoken about child marriage saying, "Child marriage in this state is also a cause for great worry. Child marriage is one of the biggest forms of societally sanctioned sexual, physical and mental abuse of young children. The practice of child marriage has time and again received been strongly opposed by government institutions as well as civil society. And yet, as India grows economically prosperous, its future continues to fall prey to illegal, under-age civil unions"

District Judge, hon'ble Subodh Kumar Srivastav penned a letter to support Surakshit Bachpan Surakshit Bharat stating that the Bharat Yatra undertaken by Mr.Satyarthi was a necessary step towards the protection of children in this country. The letter also stated that awareness and education form key pillars upon which we must build a better world for our children. To end sexual assault and abuse against children, state and union governments have laid down a number of laws and schemes and we must ensure that they are implemented properly for a progressive country.

Said a representative from the Foundation, "90% of child sexual abuse is domestic and there was a 44% increase in these cases last year. Most people think that it is only the girl child that faces abuse, however, government data shows us, an increasing number of boys face this as well. Despite the POCSO and JJ acts, a child disappears every 6 minutes in our country. If children are not safe in their homes and their schools, where are they truly safe? It is necessary to raise our voices against this violence and injustice, for society to move ahead and progress"

Earlier this month, Union Home Minister, Shri. Rajnath Singh, gave his assurance on passing the anti-trafficking law, which aligns with one of the key demands made by 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>

For more details on the Yatra, contact:

Preeti Rawat
Preeti@thegutenberg.com

Paroma Bhattacharya
paroma@satyarthi.org