**Smt. Rita Bahuguna Joshi joins Kailash Satyarthi for the Bharat Yatra**

*Moral fabric of our country is weak- Kailash Satyarthi*

**Lucknow, 7th October 2017, Saturday:** The [Bharat Yatra](http://bharatyatra.online), launched by Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi on 11 September, reached Lucknow on 7th October, the twenty-seventh day of the 35-day long march across the country to build unprecedented awareness on combating child sexual abuse and trafficking.

The Nobel Peace Laureate and his Bharat yatra were received at the Ramswaroop Memorial College by Dr. Rita Bahuguna Joshi, Cabinet Minister, Government of Uttar Pradesh, Mr. Pankaj Agarwal, Chancellor, Mrs. Pooja Agarwal, Pro Chancellor and Professor Dr. A.K. Singh, Vice Chancellor, Ramswaroop Memorial College

“Child sexual abuse today is shattering the moral fibre of our country. Relatives and family members are also perpetrators and hence people choose to silence the victims. I believe that no victim should be silenced. Not in the name of honour or because of the fear of social stigma. How can a child lose honour? It is never a child's fault and we must ostracize the perpetrator for these heinous crimes,” said Mr. Satyarthi

Dr. Rita Bahuguna Joshi emphasised and acknowledged the struggle Mr. Satyarthi had undertaken for the well-being of children by saying, “Mr Satyarthi fought for child rights when nobody in the world was aware of this social evil. You have spent your entire life working towards this cause. I salute you and your family for the dedication with which you have worked. I salute you because it was all because of your efforts that issues of children were brought to the light.”

 “We hope that your presence will inspire and motivate the youth present here today and they will also realize their responsibilities and join hands to bring about a change. We urge you to guide us and lead us towards the change. We can together eradicate these evils from the country,” she added.

The power of the Bharat Yatra can be felt through instances of positive action. Mr. Satyarthi recounted and incident where, during the Yatra, a young boy changed his name to ‘Satyarthi’, inspired by the Nobel Peace Laureate and his Bharat Yatra. He felt that Mr. Satyarthi was one of the few who could truly understand the pain and fear a child goes through and wished to be like him. He told Mr. Satyarthi that never has he ever felt so connected to the thoughts and actions of another human being.

The Kailash Satyarthi Children’s Foundation appealed to the government of Uttar to look to establish special courts for matters relating to children, with trails to be fast-tracked and judgement to be pronounced no later than 1 year from the date.
“According to reports 90% of cases registered under POCSO are pending, currently. If we follow the assumption that all child sexual abuse and exploitation is completely eradicated, it would still take 50 years to bring justice to the victims who have been abused,” added the Nobel Peace Laureate.

The Bharat Yatra event was attended by students from Maharana Pratap Inter College, Dr. Shakuntala Misra National Rehabilitation University, Rambheekh Rajrani Shikhshan Sansthan Inter College, Shri Ayodhya Singh Memorial Inter College, Amity International, Warsi Inter College and Bhavi Bharat Shikhsha Niketan Inter College.

Later in the day at Lakhimpur Kheri, addressing students at Guru Nanak girls inter college, Shri. Ravi Prakash Verma, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha said, “Childhood is in danger, our country is in danger, we need to protect our children and I am proud to be a part of Kailash ji's team in this noble endeavour.”

Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha, Lakhimpur,Shri. Ajay Mishtani added, “The community needs to be more aware of these crimes to get rid of child sexual abuse. We need to protect our children to secure their future. We will make Lakhimpur a safe city and join Mr Kailash Satyarthi in his fight against child sexual abuse.”

Over 1500 youth joined the Yatra and demanded for the safety, security and well-beings of the youngest citizens of India. The slogans called out by the marchers, resonated across the city, urging the youth to channel and harness their power to drive the change that will help India progress and develop socially.

Earlier last month, Union Home Minister, Shri. Rajnath Singh, gave 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](http://www.satyarthi.org.in)

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

*For more details on the Yatra, contact:*

**Preeti Rawat Paroma Bhattacharya**

Preeti@thegutenberg.comparoma@satyarthi.org