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Union Home Minister launches Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labour (PENCIL) Portal

SOPs for enforcement agencies on child labour also released

Shri Rajnath Singh addresses National Conference on Child Labour

The Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh launched the Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labour (PENCIL) Portal at the National Conference on Child Labour organised by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India here today. The PENCIL is an electronic platform that aims at involving Centre, State, District, Governments, civil society and the general public in achieving the target of child labour free society. Shri Rajnath Singh also launched the Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the enforcement of legal framework against child labour. The SOP is aimed at creating a ready reckoner for trainers, practitioners and monitoring agencies to ensure complete prohibition of child labour and protection of adolescents from hazardous labour ultimately leading to Child Labour Free India.

After launching the portal, Shri Rajnath Singh said that any decent society cannot allow the child labour. Child labour is a curse, he said. He said that India needs to take a resolve to eradicate the child labour from the country. He expressed faith that with conviction and resolve, we can eradicate this menace. Shri Rajnath Singh said if India could attain freedom in five years after taking resolve of 'Do or Die' of Mahatma Gandhi during the Quit India Movement, then there is no reason why India cannot attain a child labour free society in coming five years if the whole country gets united and takes resolve to do so. He said that childhood is the best period of an individual's life gifted by God. But he expressed sadness at the fact that one in every 10 children is involved in child labour and is not able to lead a normal life during his childhood.

Shri Rajnath Singh said that ratification of treaties by India in this regard shows our resolve to eradicate child labour in a time-bound manner. He said that only portal will not be able to suffice our efforts, but social awareness is needed in this regard. He quoted the example of special drives undertaken under 'Operation Smile', where 70,000-75,000 children could be saved. He emphasised that for the success of PENCIL Portal also, one month's special drive in the country, even at block levels, is required, so that everybody becomes aware of it and acts in the direction of elimination of child labour. He said that child labour not only has social implications but economic implications also. Appreciating the Ministry of Labour and Employment's efforts in releasing SOPs for enforcement agencies, he said that this will help in the better implementation of the schemes, as many schemes are good at the formation stage, but are not being implemented in an effective manner on the ground due to lack of guidance.

The Minister of State for Labour and Employment (I/C), Shri Santosh Kumar Gangwar said that children are the country's assets and its future. He said that due to short-term economic and social constraints, the income from child labour may appear to be good, but in the long run, it is not so. He said that keeping in mind the overall development of children, the employment of children under the age of 14 years is not allowed under the law for

any occupation and for the children between 14-18 years, the employment is not allowed in occupations that are harmful to their physical and mental health. He said that main hurdle in the implementation of laws is lack of awareness and guidance and the SOPs released today will be useful to the enforcement agencies. He further said that child labour is a social problem and positive attitude is very important in this regard. He expressed hope that all sections of India will rise above law to realise the dream of child-labour free society. The Labour Minister stated that India ratified the two Core Conventions of International Labour Organization (ILO), Convention 138 regarding admission of age to employment and Convention 182 regarding worst forms of Child Labour in June 2017 which shows our commitment to a child labour free nation.

Shri Kailash Satyarthi, Nobel Peace Laureate and Child Right Activist was the Guest of Honour on the occasion. Expressing happiness over the release of PENCIL portal, he said that today is a historic day for India. India is telling the world that it will give PENCIL in the hands of children and not tools to work, he added. He emphasised that the top leadership should be involved in these campaigns. He said that PENCIL and SOPs are important not only for India but also for the world in showing a new direction to them. He said this proves that fact that technology can be converted into instruments of social upliftment and power. Shri Satyarthi said that currently, he is on 'Bharat Yatra' to spread awareness and sensitise on issues related to child sexual abuse and child trafficking. He also emphasised on the institutional mechanism and exclusive courts for handling cases related to child sexual abuse.

Earlier while delivering the welcome address, Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment, Smt. M. Sathiyavathy said that Government has taken various initiatives and developed a legal framework to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of eliminating child labour by the year 2025. She said that child labour has come down in India as per 2011 census as compared to 2001 census. She further stated that broad consultation was done with all the stakeholders before finalizing the amendments in central rules which was notified on 2nd June 2017. For the first time we have provided for prevention, rescue and rehabilitation of children in the central rules and institutional set up at the district level in the form up district task force. She said that SOPs will provide step by step guidelines and will be a ready reckoner for trainers, practitioners and monitoring agencies.

In a video message during the conference, Mr Guy Ryder, DG, ILO, congratulated India for its foresight and expressed the hope that India will play a critical role in supporting ILO's efforts around the globe.

On the occasion, a short film on child labour and an animated detailed presentation on PENCIL portal were also shown.

The PENCIL Portal (pencil.gov.in) has various components, namely Child Tracking System, Complaint Corner, State Government, National Child Labour Project and Convergence. The Districts will nominate District Nodal Officers (DNOs) who will receive the complaints and within 48 hours of receiving, they will check the genuineness of the complaint and take the rescue measures in coordination with police, if the complaint is found to be genuine. Till date, 7 states/UTs have appointed the DNOs.

The State Labour Ministers from Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Delhi, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Rajasthan participated in the conference. The conference was also attended by

Labour Secretaries of the State, Secretaries of Central Ministries, District Nodal Officers as well as the Project Directors for National Child Labour Project (NCLP).

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