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## Violence against children is becoming an epidemic, says Satyarthi



**Solemn pledge:** Noble laureate Kailash Satyarthi and Latha Rajinikanth at the Bharat Yatra on Wednesday. • S. R. RAGHUNATHAN

Flags off Bharat Yatra campaign against child abuse and trafficking in Chennai

STAFF REPORTER  
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Flagging off the 'Bharat Yatra,' a march to end sexual abuse and trafficking of children, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Kailash Satyarthi called the increasing instances of violence against children in the country as an 'epidemic'.

"I look at this Yatra as a war which should be waged against this epidemic which has been increasing alarmingly. The victims, parents and ordinary citizens live in

fear and predators and abusers roam because a sense of fearlessness has set in," he said, speaking to mediapersons on the sidelines of his campaign activities in the city by the Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation.

"We need speedy disposal of cases under the POCSO Act. Last year, of the 15,000 odd cases that were registered, only 4% ended in conviction and 6% had acquittals.

"Nearly 90% is still

pending in the courts, which is shocking," he added.

Mr. Satyarthi addressed students of the Stella Maris College on Wednesday morning.

The students and the faculty members undertook a pledge against violence and to work towards making the country safer for children.

Taking out a march as a part of the 'Yatra' from Rajarathinam stadium, he was joined by activists, representatives from various NGOs

and social organisations in the city.

Actor Dhanush and directors Aishwarya and Soundarya Rajinikanth were among those who joined him on the march.

In the wake of the recent incident in Gurugram where a young boy was murdered on his school premises, Mr. Satyarthi said that he was appealing to the political community to take interest in the functioning of schools in their constituencies.

"Make surprise visits and check if the schools are functioning properly and are safe for children. Schools should be made safe havens for children and I strongly recommend age appropriate sex education, especially at institutions in remote areas where children need more exposure and awareness," he said. As part of this social movement, Mr. Satyarthi said he would be travelling from Kanyakumari and would touch 22 states.