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Satyarthi asks politicians to ensure safety of children

CHENNAI: Nobel Peace prize winner, child's rights activist and educationist, Kailash Satyarthi. He was in the city on Wednesday as part of his march to end sexual abuse and trafficking in children.

His programme in Chennai began with his address to the students of Stella Maris College, followed by an event at Rajarathinam Stadium, attended by celebrities like Dhanush and Lata Rajinikanth. The march, which was first flagged-off in Kanniyakumari, will span over 11,000 km, across 22 states and union territories.

Talking to the media, he said, "My war against rape and sexual abuse began in Kanniyakumari on September 11. This is not an ordinary campaign. This is a war because the hidden moral epidemic has grown multi-fold. When the victims, parents and ordinary citizens live in fear and the predators, abusers and rapists roam around freely, a war is needed."

Expanding further, he said, "Every day we hear news about abuse of a child. The boys and girls do not speak about it because of social taboo, fear and family honour. This march is from fear to fearlessness, silence to sound and from darkness to light." Through this march, he aims to reach out to as many people as possible. "I am making an appeal to all the political parties. They should listen to the voice of the people as parents are now scared. Go to schools in your constituencies and see if the students are safe," he said.

He also appealed for speedy disposal of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences cases. "Around 15,000 cases have been registered with only 4 per cent ending in convictions, 6 per cent acquittals, while 90 per cent of cases are pending," he pointed out. His organisation would be collaborating with local NGOs, activists, etc, to participate in the march.



Photos: Justin George

Actor Dhanush, Lata Rajinikanth, PMK leader Dr Anbumani Ramadoss and other leading personalities took part in Kailash Satyarthi's Bharat Yatra, Safe Childhood rally held at Rajarathinam Stadium on Wednesday



Kailash Satyarthi, winner of the Nobel Peace prize, interacted with young survivors of violence in Stella Maris College. Chief Justice of MHC, Indira Banerjee is also seen

Chief Justice lends support

Speaking at the event in Stella Maris College, the Chief Justice (CJ) of Madras High Court, Indira Banerjee, reiterated that all children are equal. "They are born equal and are entitled to all the basic rights," she said. She pointed out that innocent children grow up to be the kind of

adults they are moulded to be. If nurtured with love and affection, if properly educated they grow up to be good citizens, she said.

Banerjee added that it is unfortunate that many children do not enjoy childhood, but go through the worst form of exploitation. She also listed out the constitutional and legal provisions that

Stalin's support

CHENNAI: DMK's Working President MK Stalin took to Facebook to endorse support to Satyarthi, who called on

him on Wednesday. "It is heartening to note that this Yatra is going to make one crore people to undertake a five point pledge whose underlying message is to stop every form of abuse against children and give them the childhood they deserve."

could be used for child welfare. "I read a news report that said In India, every day, 40 children are raped. This is unfortunate. Sexual abuse affects children's psychology. The abuse of children has to stop and each and every one of us has to collectively take responsibility for it," she added.

The CJ said that it is the perpetrators of the abuse who are criminals. "The children who are abused are not at fault. Do not try to hide the incidents of abuse. Come up in the open. Report the incidents. It is the abusers who have to be punished," she said.

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— Indira Banerjee, Chief Justice, MHC