

National Consultation on the Elimination of Human Trafficking

30th July, 2021- 10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Human trafficking is not a new crime, rather it is an old age practice which had been prevalent in the form of 'slavery'. While that traditional form of slavery exists no more, it continues to survive in the changed form of human trafficking, often termed as 'modern slavery' which shamefully exploits human beings as profit making commodity, rips their dignity apart and severely violates their rights.

Trafficking has emerged as a huge problem all over the world and is the third largest international criminal enterprise, generating an estimated \$150 billion dollars annually (ILO, 2014). Trafficking is a transnational organised crime, starting from the identification of the victims, their transportation and lastly their exploitation, which operates seamlessly across national as well international borders. It is a market where victims are bought, sold, traded and used to meet the worldwide demand for sex, cheap labour, slavery, human organs and pornography, etc.

The Government of India has demonstrated its resolve to eliminate trafficking by ratifying international conventions relating to trafficking, making policies and legislative changes, building institutions and developing accountability mechanisms

to tackle trafficking. Currently, trafficking as a crime is addressed under various sections of Indian Penal Code 1860 and the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act of 1956 in the country.

According to the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report 2021 which is published by the Department of State, USA, the COVID 19 Pandemic has further enhanced the vulnerability of the poor and marginalized families to human trafficking. Aftermath of the pandemic has resulted in steep fall in the economy and has added to the desperation of business owners to recoup their losses leading to creation of a massive demand for cheap labour within the supply chain. Additionally, the pandemic has also lead to an increase in trafficking online.

Regardless of the challenges posed by the pandemic last year, Bachpan Bachao Andolan with the support of Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) has rescued more than 9000 children from situations of exploitation who were trafficked from different parts of the country. The statistics published by National Crimes Record Bureau (NCRB) every year show an increasing trend of cases of trafficking. The cases of trafficking increased by 14.3% in 2019 as compared to the previous year.

In order to effectively combat the organized crime of trafficking, need has been felt for quite some time for a special law that plugs all the existing loopholes in the legal

regime and deals with every aspect of trafficking such as, its prevention, combatting, specialised agencies for investigation, special courts for trial, rehabilitation, etc.

The civil society organisations (CSOs) have a major role to play in prevention and elimination of trafficking. There is thus a need to discuss the emerging forms of trafficking including online trafficking due to the new normal posed by COVID 19 Pandemic and identify the challenges faced in combating trafficking once the new Anti-Trafficking Bill which is in public domain becomes a law.

Recently, the Union Government has placed in public domain the new Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021, for comments and suggestions. To deliberate upon the provisions of the Bill, on the emerging forms of trafficking due to COVID 19 pandemic and the role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in combating the crime of trafficking, the Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation (KSCF) and the Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) are organizing a National Consultation. The consultation is titled; "National Consultation on the Elimination of Human Trafficking". It aims at bringing together various stakeholders responsible for prevention and control of trafficking as also for the protection and rehabilitation of the victims of this crime. The National Consultation is scheduled to be held on 30th July 2021 from 10:00 am to 02:00 pm.