

# **CHILDREN/CHILD LABOUR - 2015**

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Compiled By  
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## **Mission Khoj to find missing kids (14)**

New Delhi: The Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) on Wednesday has launched an operation 'Khoj' for finding the missing children. Chairperson of DCPCR Arun Mathur said that the commission was concerned over the increasing number of missing children in the capital. He said that under the operation 'Khoj' the DCPCR will tap information about "missing children from all sources and circulate the same along with photographs to all networked Homes for immediate action." A network of approximately 45 children's homes in Delhi has been created and in case a child is found in one of the homes, the DCPCR will take appropriate steps to identify and reunite the child with his family. "The information will be sought through email ID missingchild.dcpcr@gmail.com and the reply is also expected on the same ID," said DCPCR. The DCPCR decided to commission a study to assess and analyse the available data about rescue, recovery and post rescue procedures besides issues of inter-state coordination. Mathur said that the commission intends to enlarge the network to include more homes and organise regular meetings for sensitisation of the home in-charges. The Commission expects that through proper follow-up many cases related to missing children can be solved. According to the DCPCR, 7,235 children were reported missing in Delhi in 2013. Some 5,248 children went missing in 2012, 5,111 kids were reported missing in 2011. About 5,946 children went missing in 2009 and some 5,091 kids were reported missing in 2010. Some 6,268 children were reported missing from Delhi in 2008. Mathur said the DCPCR has been monitoring the cases both at an individual level as well as the policy level. "In individual cases, the commission issues notice to the concerned police station for an Action Taken Report in the matter. It was seen that the replies from the police station reach the commission quite late," said DCPCR in a statement. A national consultation on inter-state coordination for rehabilitation of rescued child labourers came to the conclusion that there is not the need for strengthening the rehabilitation mechanisms of child labour in source states as well as in Delhi, but also the necessity of improving inter-state coordination. (Deccan Herald 1/1/15)

## **Railways' SOP about rights of kids found on its premises still on paper (14)**

The standard operation procedure (SOP) laid down by the Railway Board to safeguard rights of children arriving at and living on railway stations doesn't seem to have amounted to much. It's been a year since the Board passed an order to implement the SOP immediately, but the order has just remained on paper. The detailed SOP talks about the role various stakeholders need to play to ensure that children on railway platforms, including those who have run away from home, have gone missing from railway premises and who work there, are safe and protected. "We received the letter about the implementation of SOP a year back, but we have not been given any funds to implement it," said a city station master. "I have written several letters to my superiors for kick-starting the implementation of the SOP, but I haven't got any reply so far." According to the SOP, the railways needs to create children assistance centres at all major stations. It further demands that the railways make arrangements for proper clothing, toilet, first aid and medicine for children. "We don't have a single centre; whenever we get such children, we make a basic entry in our register and hand them over to the Government Railway Police (GRP)," said a station

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\* This is a collection of previously published news and views from the print as well as the electronic media, whose reference marked at the end of each news items. Department of Documentation and Library (DDL) of the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi neither claims to the veracity of the facts in the news nor subscribes to the views expressed.

manager. The SOP instructs the railways to maintain a detailed record of children found alone or in distress on platforms. The station master is expected to maintain a record of the children — name, age, parents' names, details of siblings, address, and reason for leaving home. The SOP adds that there need to be advocacy messages put up at stations to create awareness on this, installing a functional public telephone at the centres, and creating a sufficient fund with station masters to meet the expenditure on food, clothing, toiletries and first-aid kit, and commute cost when a child is taken to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC). A station master, however, said, "We aren't given any money to spend on the children, we spend from our own pocket. We just hand them over to the GRP, who later they take them to the CWC.." (DNA 4/1/15)

#### **Cuttack police rescue 10 child labourers (14)**

CUTTACK: Ten child labourers who were rescued by the police, were on Sunday sent to a local shelter home here after conducting an ossification test on them to determine their ages. The children were brought here from Murshidabad district of West Bengal by two agents to employ them as labourers in coal mines at Talcher. They were however, rescued by Chauliaganj police on Saturday after they alighted from a train here to catch a bus to Talcher. The police arrested one of the agents—Sheikh Majibul and sent him to court. On the other hand, the district Child Welfare Committee (CWC) made arrangements to keep the children at a shelter home here until they are reunited with their families. (The Hindu 5/1/15)

#### **Muzaffarnagar cops to launch hunt for missing kids (14)**

Muzaffarnagar: Following directions of the state government, police have launched a month-long campaign called "operation smile" to trace missing children in the district. The drive will go on till January 31. Of the 11 children who had gone missing in 2014, three are still missing. According to senior superintendent of police, HN Singh, a task force has been formed for Operation Smile. The aim of the initiative is to trace and rescue children who had been reported missing in the district in the last ten years. "The campaign aims to identify, trace, locate and rehabilitate children who were either kidnapped or who had left home on their own and have been subjected to abuse, exploitation or employed as child labour," Singh said. Police sources say that a list of missing children has been prepared. Once such children were identified as missing, cops will match their details with those of the kids in the list. Data from the district, zonal and state levels would be compared. It will also be shared at the national level. Cops will keep strict vigil at bus stands, railway stations, shelter homes and other public spaces. If children are found in these places, the police will take their details and upload them, along with photographs of the kids, on a dedicated portal for missing children. Recently, the operation was launched in Ghaziabad and was deemed a huge success. 225 missing children were traced and reunited with their parents. After the success of the campaign in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh's principal secretary (home) instructed police officials in all districts to launch the operation. SSP HN Singh has ordered all station officers in the district to launch the drive in areas within their jurisdiction. (Times of India 6/1/15)

#### **Street Kids Find Home and Mentor (14)**

VIJAYANAGAR: Eighteen children of construction workers are looking at a bright future, thanks to the Right to Education Act and a kind education official. For many years, the street was their home, their playground and workplace. Today they have found shelter, protection and admission, and are basking in their newfound life. For these children, moving from the dusty, chaotic streets to a safe, steady and protected environment has been a life-changing experience. Children of workers who have migrated from Madhya Pradesh, they are grateful to Nagarathnamma D, Block Education Officer, South Range-2, for making it possible. When they were fending for themselves, they sold balloons on the streets, looked after their younger siblings, and played amid the dirty, dug-up roads beneath the Metro Rail bridges. They cannot believe they have a roof over their heads, food on their plates, books to read, a place to relax and play, and school uniforms and good clothes to wear. They even go on picnics and Metro rides. In 2013,

33 children were identified under the 'out of school' Education Department survey in Vijayanagar. The department initially put up a tent school and imparted a bridge course, preparing the children for school. Eventually, 18 children were admitted to five private, unaided schools. They have adjusted well, face no discrimination, and are coping with their studies, say officials. Schools that have admitted them are RNS Vidyaniketan, Holy Angels School, Sree Bharatiya Vidyalaya, Adichunchungiri English School, and New Cambridge School. If nine are studying in the first standard, the rest are in LKG. The schools follow the ICSE and the state syllabi. Nagarathamma told City Express the department had to overcome much suspicion and opposition from parents. "They are homeless, illiterate, and speak only Hindi. Since they had been working on the stretch along Yelahanka, Peenya and Vijayanagar for 10-15 years, they were on the streets, with no avenues to educate their children. We managed to convince them about the importance of school," she said. Nagarathamma is passionate about educating such children and does her best to get them to school. "Of the 33 we initially identified, 10-12 went back to Madhya Pradesh but the rest were clothed, housed, and admitted to big schools," she said. She is assisted by many people, including teacher C H Chandrashekaraiyah and parent Jayanthi. After much thought, they decided to house the children at the Government Model Primary School in Hosahalli and turned two big classrooms into a dormitory with an attached kitchen. Others pitched in to help. If Vijaynagar MLA Krishnappa looks after their daily breakfast needs and provides clothes, NGO Annapurna is donating their groceries. The group has not taken any funds from the government to run this initiative. Mela, a chirpy girl now enjoying her holidays on the streets with her big family of five siblings, is happy she is studying. Playing at the government school that has become their home, Kiran and his friends shower all their love on Nagarathana whom they affectionately call amma. Mela, who has started learning English and Kannada, said, "I enjoy going to school." Thanks to the initiative, these children are finding a way out of their poverty and squalor. (New Indian Express 7/1/15)

#### **Give underprivileged children the life they deserve (14)**

It has been his life's mission. Last week, Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi renewed his demand for a complete ban on every kind of child labour up to 14 years. Seeking the early passage of a pending legislation against child labour, Mr Satyarthi said history "won't forgive" MPs if they fail in the task. The pending legislation is the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Bill, and, if passed by Parliament, employing children below 14 years in any occupation will become illegal, making it consistent with the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. The activist also demanded that even children between 14 and 18 years must not be allowed to work in labour activities notified as hazardous. The government banned child labour in 2012, but implementation has been patchy. The reasons for such a demand are not far to seek: According to the 2011 census, there are about 4.35 million working children in the 5-14 age bracket. In the 2001 census, the number was about 12.6 million. However, despite a 65% reduction in the number of working children, India still has the largest number of child labourers in the world. Non-profit organisations estimate there are more than 60 million child labourers, which is 6% of India's total population. While the passage of the new law would give children's right a huge fillip, eradicating child labour will not be easy. This is because while everyone tends to talk about child labour, very little focus is put on the socio-economic situation of their families which forces them to send their children out to work. In fact, one of the programmes that Mr Satyarthi's organisation runs — Bachchan Bachao Andolan — tries to tackle this issue by helping parents access government funds so that they are not forced to take their wards out of schools to earn extra money. Along with focusing on the backend (families), there is an urgent need to encourage education, enforce labour laws to abolish child trafficking, promote fair trade and replace child workers with adult workers to ensure that children live the life they are meant to. (Hindustan Times 11/1/15)

#### **Attacks on children setback to securing rights: Kailash Satyarthi (14)**

New Delhi: Attacks on children take us back several steps in our actions towards collective progress of securing child rights across the globe, said child rights champion Kailash Satyarthi Friday. He regretted incidents like attacks on school children in Peshawar, kidnapping of girls by Boko Haram and ISIS and the Maoist attack in Assam. In a communication on the eve of the seventeenth anniversary of his organisation - Global March Against Child Labour - Satyarthi, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last year, said the new year was not the time to lose hope. "It is a time for us to put in our resources for the betterment of our children," he said. Giving details about the hardships being faced by children across the globe, he said the Nobel prize has reinforced his belief that working together "we can surely end slavery and change children's lives for the better". "From child soldiers to trafficking for labour and sex, from inter-generational bonded labour to girls forbidden to attend school, the list of appalling injustices committed against children is, unfortunately, a long one. Yet, we must remain optimistic and unite with the children to protect their fate and preserve their innocence," he said. Satyarthi, who shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani activist for female education, said any big goal set by anybody would be meaningless without addressing the issue of child labour. "I have consistently argued since the Millennium Development Goals were announced that without abolition of child labour, many development goals including education, poverty reduction, health and gender equity could not be achieved. I am glad that the Sustainable Development goals have included child labour, laid emphasis on education and violence against children which we have been struggling for several years," he said. The Global March Against Child Labour is a worldwide network of trade unions, teachers and civil society organisations that work together for the shared development goals of eliminating and preventing all forms of child labour and ensuring access to free, meaningful and good quality public education for all children. (Zee News 16/1/15)

#### **India makes progress in bringing children to schools: UN (14)**

United Nations: India has been able to decrease its number of out-of-school children by nearly 16 million between 2000 and 2012, driving the progress in South Asia, but it still has 1.4 million children not attending primary school, a United Nations report said. The biggest decrease in the number of out-of-school children was seen in South Asia, where their numbers fell by 23 million between 2000 and 2012, according to a new joint report 'Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All: Findings from the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children was produced by UNESCO and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)'. Much of the global progress since 2000 in decreasing the number of out-of-school children has been driven by a small number of countries, with India alone decreasing its number of out-of-school children by nearly 16 million between 2000 and 2011. In relative terms, 42 countries were able to more than halve their numbers of primary out-of-school children between 2000 and 2012, including Algeria, Burundi, Cambodia, Ghana, India, Iran, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Viet Nam, Yemen and Zambia. However, despite such impressive progress in many countries, about nine per cent of all children of primary school age worldwide eight per cent of all boys and 10 per cent of all girls were still out of school in 2012. The majority, 31 million of the 58 million out-of-school children, were girls. India has 58.81 million girls and 63.71 million boys of primary school age. As of 2011, 1.4 million children of primary school age did not go to school in India, with 18 per cent girls out of school and 14 per cent boys. The other countries with more than half a million out-of-school children include Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Pakistan and Sudan. India had 14 per cent of children in the 7-14 years age category involved in child labour. The report said that while India has made significant improvement in primary education enrolment, the figures for children with disabilities are staggering. Out of 2.9 million children with disabilities in India, 990,000 children aged 6 to 14 years (34 per cent) are out of school. The percentages are even higher among children with intellectual disabilities (48 per cent), speech impairments (36 per cent) and multiple disabilities (59 per cent). "India has made tremendous efforts to make its education system more inclusive. Under the Right to Education Act, all children have the right to go to school...To accommodate a greater number of children with disabilities, further progress is needed," it said. The

report credited initiatives such as abolition of school fees, cash transfer programmes and school feeding programmes in ensuring more children attend and stay in school. The largest school feeding was implemented in India with 120 million school children benefiting by 2006 and has been credited with a significant positive effect on both school enrolment and attendance rates. The report further said that one in five adolescents worldwide is not in school, which means that some 63 million young people between the ages of 12 and 15 are denied their right to an education, mainly because they are marginalized and poor, the joint UN agency report said as pressure mounts to include universal secondary education in the post-2015 global development agenda. "This report serves as wake-up call to mobilize the resources needed to guarantee basic education for every child, once and for all," UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova said. The data found that as children get older, the risk that they will never start school or will drop out increases. One in ten children of primary school age is out of school compared to one in five adolescents. The study also found that in total, 121 million children and adolescents have either never started school or dropped out despite the international community's promise to achieve Education for All by 2015. The report added that "business as usual" has not worked and there has been almost no progress in reducing the number of adolescents out of school since 2007. Children living in conflict, child labourers and those facing discrimination are most affected. And without major shifts in policies and resources, previous education gains may erode. "If current trends continue, 25 million children 15 million girls and 10 million boys are likely to never set foot inside a classroom," it said. For a concrete policy shift, the study calls on governments to provide robust information on marginalised children. (Zee News 21/1/15)

#### **Crime Patrol to promote Bachpan Bachao Andolan (14)**

Known for its riveting concept, this weekend, Sony Entertainment Television's Crime Patrol will see some heart wrenching stories on child labour and child trafficking. Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi, the founder of Bachpan Bachao Andolan, will appear as a special guest on this weekend's episode of the show. Crime Patrol will throw light on the growing phenomenon of child trafficking and exploitation, that has left the people numb. One of the episodes will portray the story of a 16 year old girl named Sakina' who was rescued by Kailash Satyarthi's Bachpan Bachao Andolan from the clutches of bride traffickers. Sakina was sold not once but twice as a sex-slave. Another episode will focus on an 18 year girl named Reena who was rescued from the clutches of a police constable who was exploiting her in the pretext of welfare. To know how Sakina and Reena were rescued from these cruel crime, don't miss to watch Crime Patrol this weekend at 11 pm only on Sony Entertainment Television. (Times of India 24/1/15)

#### **250 child labourers rescued in Hyderabad (14)**

Hyderabad: As many as 250 children, including 10 girls from Bihar, who were forced to work as child labourers in hazardous industries were today rescued from Old City here, police said. As many as 250 children, including 10 girls from Bihar, who were forced to work as child labourers in hazardous industries were today rescued from Old City here, police said. The children were rescued during a massive cordon and search operation carried out by South Zone police in different areas of Old City, a senior police officer said. "Keeping in view of IB alert ahead of Republic Day we carried out searches to nab habitual criminals. We found these children, aged between 8-13 years kept in rooms of some rowdies. They are being exploited for hazardous industries employments," Deputy Commissioner of Police (South Zone) V Satyanarayana. Most of the children are from districts of Bihar including Gaya and these children were brought to the city after giving an advance ranging between Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000 from Bihar, the DCP said. The operation was continuing. To keep a check on anti-social elements and to induce a sense of security among people Cyberabad and Hyderabad Police have been conducting massive search operations in different parts of the city for the past several months based on information that few pockets have turned out to be shelters for criminals like property offenders, snatchers and those indulging in other illegal activities. (DNA 24/1/15)

### **'Rehabilitate rescued children' (14)**

HYDERABAD: The State Commission for Protection of Child Rights has asked the authorities concerned to take necessary measures to rehabilitate the children who were rescued from bangle units on Saturday. The city police rescued around 200 children employed at the bangle making units during a search operation. The commission asked the police to register cases under Section 370A of Indian Penal Code while directing social welfare department, Sarva Siksha Abhiyaan, National Child Labour Programme to fully engage themselves in the rehabilitation of the children. (The Hindu 26/1/15)

### **12 child labourers rescued in Thanjavur (14)**

TRICHY: Twelve child labourers --all of them boys -- were rescued from shops and automobile workshops in Thanjavur on Wednesday. The Child Labour Task Force comprising officials from Childline, labour department, district child protection committee and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) conducted raids at shops in Karanthai, Tholkappiar Sathukkam, Railadi and near Thanjavur Government Medical College. The officials found small boys working in teashops, grocery shops, and automobile workshops. The boys, who were school dropouts, had been working there for more than six months and paid very less. All of them were rescued and their parents were directed to produce birth certificates to confirm their age. "The boys aged below 14 years will be sent to schools thorough the SSA. Likewise, the boys aged above 14 years should also join school according to the Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act," said P Fathima Raj of Childline. Labour department officials were planning to file cases against the shop owners who employed the boys aged below 14 years. (Times of India 29/1/15)

### **103 Child Labourers Rescued From Jaipur Brought to Gaya (14)**

GAYA: Altogether 102 child labourers rescued from Jaipur (Rajasthan) were brought today to Gaya in Bihar. The kids were working in cottage and small scale industries in Jaipur and were rescued in December last year. Confirming their arrival, Gaya District Magistrate Sanjay Agrawal said a seven-member team was sent to bring the rescued children after officials in Rajasthan informed about them. "The children were working as labourers in bangle and handicraft industries. 53 of them are from Gaya, 13 from Samastipur, two from Muzaffarpur and the rest are from Banka, Nawada, Katihar, Madhubani, Sitamarhi, Darbhanga, Khagaria and Aurangabad districts," Agrawal said adding, they belong to poor families and were trafficked to the Pink City by middlemen and labour contractors with promises of money and better living. The District Magistrate said the rescued children have been handed over to an NGO, Rescue Junction and efforts were being made to locate their addresses and reunite them with their families. (New Indian Express 1/2/15)

### **3-year-old girl kidnapped, raped and hung from tree in Bihar (14)**

Patna: A three-year-old girl was allegedly kidnapped, sexually assaulted and hung naked from a tree by men posing as employees of a private nursing home in north Bihar's Madhubani district, police said on Saturday. The incident took place late on Thursday at a village in Madhubani, about 190 km northwest from state capital Patna. Reports said the girl had gone to the private nursing home, located under Bisfi police station, for a check-up along with her mother on Thursday evening. Police investigations suggest the abductors offered toffees to lure the victim. She was then taken to a nearby village, assaulted and hung upside down from a mango tree. "It appears the miscreants, after committing the crime, hung her upside down from the tree in the hope she would eventually die from the ensuing distress," said Aunsi police outpost in-charge Sanjay Kumar. Kumar said the girl's family had initially registered a missing person's case when she could not be located at the nursing home for several hours. However, more serious sections of Indian Penal Code became applicable after she was found. An FIR has been lodged at the Bisfi police station of Madhubani. The girl was rushed to the Darbhanga Medical College and

Hospital (DMCH) in the district headquarters town of Darbhanga, near Madhubani, where her condition is stated to be critical. Doctors treating the girl said she has multiple injury marks on her body, indicating she was assaulted both physically and sexually. "There are injuries on the victim's private parts. Her condition is critical but stable," said Dr Bhuvan at DMCH. One of the prime suspects in the case was caught by villagers on Saturday and handed over to the police. Madhubani's assistant superintendent of police, AK Pandey, told HT the police were able to identify the suspect as Mohammed Tabrez, a 35-year-old married man. "We are questioning the suspect. He is believed to have played a role in the incident. However, information about the role of any other(s) in the crime will be known only after we have interrogated this man," said Pandey. (Hindustan Times 1/2/15)

#### **West Bengal: Panel wants child rights and laws in school syllabus (14)**

Kolkata: To make children understand what rights they are entitled to, West Bengal's child rights panel wants the students to be taught about them as part of the school curriculum. Ashokendu Sengupta, chairperson of the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, said they will recommend the state government to include various laws related to right to education and protection from sexual abuse a part of the school syllabus. "We do not want to put any extra load on the children but there should be at least one page somewhere in their book which tells them about their rights in a simple language. This will increase awareness. Only we know about child rights and laws but they must also know," he told a news agency. The panel will soon meet the state school syllabus committee to impress upon them the need to include child rights at primary and secondary school level. Teenager Sikha Patra, who works as a peer leader and educator with child rights NGO Prayasam, said she would never have been aware of her rights as a child had she not been associated with activists. "My friends don't know what are their rights as a child. Those in English medium schools are aware of these things but not those in Bengali medium ones. Therefore, child rights should be included in the school curriculum," she said. UNICEF's West Bengal chief Asadur Rahman also supported it saying basic rights about children should be there in the school syllabus. Rahman said that the Right to Education Act advocates for child-friendly schools where children and their parents are consulted in the institute's planning. The child panel, which has constituted two sub-committees for studying the issue, said they are selecting parts of the Convention on Rights of The Child (CRC) which can be included in the curriculum. CRC was adopted by the United Nations' General Assembly in 1989 and serves as a global index on child rights. Sengupta said that every school should tell the children that whenever they are in distress they can call 1098 - a 24-hour child helpline. "This is the most important thing. A child should know that when he is in danger he can call this number or can seek help for other children," he said. They also want the inclusion of Right to Education (RTE) Act, which ensures free and compulsory education for children in the age group of 6-14 years, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012 in the syllabus. "At the school level, they must have literature, posters and other materials to promote child rights," the panel's chairperson said. (Zee News 5/2/15)

#### **25 bonded child labourers rescued in city (14)**

LUCKNOW: As many as 25 boys working as bonded labour were rescued from a bangle-making factory in Khajua locality of the city here on Monday evening. Aging between 8-14 years most of these boys hail from villages in Bihar and were making bangles in hazardous conditions for the past three years. They were all living in a ten-by-ten room besides being made to work illegally. They boys claimed they were never given enough to eat and were made to work for 12-14 hours a day for a meager Rs 1,500 a month. There were no off-days and health facilities. The boys were rescued in a joint operation undertaken by state police department's Anti-Human Trafficking cell and social organisation Childline. Besides saving the boys, the team recovered dangerous chemicals compounds which are known to cause pulmonary infections like tuberculosis from the place. The police also arrested two persons named Mohsin and Jugal Kishore for making children work and risk their lives. FIR was also registered against the two for violating

provisions of Juvenile Justice Act 2000, Child Labour Prevention Act 1986 and bonded labour prevention act 1976. Inspector Om Prakash Singh who headed the operation cited example of the youngest child Salman who got the job through a relative. TOI saw him bare-foot braving the chilly breeze in a t-shirt. "I have worked in Hyderabad and Jaipur too," the boy told TOI. Oldest among the children Mohammad Akeel said they all were working to support their families. "Our parents do not have enough to feed the whole family," he stated. Manoj Verma, member of Childline associated with the operation, informed that the children would be sent to shelter homes now and would later be re-united with their families. (Times of India 10/2/15)

#### **Rights groups to reach out to children in slums (14)**

VISAKHAPATNAM: Exactly four months ago, when Hudhud ravaged the city, life came to a standstill for many. And the impact was severe for those residing in slums. More than 100 children from several slum areas narrated their nightmarish experience on that day, at a consultation meet organised jointly by the Child Rights Advocacy Foundation and the Visakha Forum for Child Rights (VFCR) on Tuesday. Students studying in classes VI and X in slum areas such as Kobbarithota, Jalaripeta, Ambedkar Colony, and Bukka Veedhi came forward to share their experiences. "There was no proper drinking water for almost one week. Our houses were submerged due to overflowing storm water drains. Except for a few NGO representatives who turned up to help us push things through, we did not receive any other help," says Padma a resident of Bhupesh Nagar. Most of the slum-dwellers said that they were not able to afford vegetables and milk. Some of them said that there were no toilet facilities in their localities. Joint Collector J. Nivas, who attended the meeting as chief guest, explained the features of the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, under which the government had increased the unit cost of the individual household latrine to Rs.12,000 from Rs.10,000. He said that people should consider construction of toilets more seriously and ensure that every household had one. As part of the relief measure, Mr. Nivas said that textbooks would be distributed to schoolchildren after conducting a review meeting with the DEO. Reaching out to the disadvantaged groups, convener of VFCR R.D. Sampath Kumar said that the forum would be distributing notebooks, geometry boxes, and a pair of shoes to 1,000 schoolchildren in a couple of weeks. (The Hindu 11/2/15)

#### **Panel appointed to look into sexual abuse in Delhi schools (14)**

NEW DELHI: To curb incidents of sexual abuse of school students, Delhi government has told the Supreme Court that it has asked all schools to have CCTVs, especially in corridors and at entrances, in addition to administering a pledge to boys to respect women. The government said it has also constituted committees at three levels—school, district and headquarters—to address issues relating to sexual abuse of students. Women members would be in majority in all these committees, it said. In an affidavit, the Directorate of Education said it has directed schools to appoint a nodal officer who would stay back in school after children leave to look into complaints of any child not reaching home. The government filed its response in compliance with a court order which on December 5 had issued notices to states on a PIL by advocate Vineet Dhanda expressing concern over safety of girl students in schools. The government said 70,000 teachers have been trained in gender sensitization in the last two years. It also said schools have been directed to talk to the local police to ensure a PCR van is stationed near schools at the time of opening and closing. It said a pledge has been included in the students' diary saying they would respect and protect the dignity of women and the pledge was being repeated by students on numerous occasions in schools. The court last year had agreed to examine the arrangement made by states in schools to prevent cases of sexual abuse and had issued notices to the Centre and states. The PIL had sought direction from the court to the government to frame laws, guidelines and policies "fixing liability of educational institutions on whose premises sexual abuse takes place". It had said the liability of schools should be spelt out in cases of physical and mental abuse. (Times of India 13/2/15)

### **Delhi Chief Minister Kejriwal Urged to Take Up Issues of Street Kids (14)**

NEW DELHI: An organisation of street children has urged Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to address their issues and include them as part of the government's agenda. The organisation, 'Badhte Kadam', today said that it had faxed the letter to the CM's office yesterday. "We are hopeful that he will successfully carry out his tenure while helping us to address our issues," 16-year-old Chandni, a member of the group, said, adding that they had written a similar letter during the previous AAP government. Another member Jyoti, 14, said, "Our demands include ensuring legal identity to street and working children, proper implementation of all government schemes for underprivileged children and action against people involved in child labour." Director of Childhood Enhancement through Training and Action (CHETNA), of which 'Badhte Kadam' is a part, said, "Children have a lot of hope from this government and I hope they take up the issues highlighted by them on a priority basis." (New Indian Express 16/2/15)

### **Child brides serve 'probation period' before marriage in Odisha village (14)**

BHUBANESWAR: Prior to marriage, teenaged brides in Odisha's capital city are forced to spend time in their prospective in-laws' house in order to assess if they fit the role of a suitable bride. This crude form of child marriage is still practised by many in the snake-charmer community residing in Padmaksharipur village in Bhubaneswar. Many girls are withdrawn from school, some even at elementary level, and forced into marriage alliances. "My daughter was just 12 when I arranged a groom for her. She has been helping her in-laws in household chores for the past four years. Finally, her in-laws have agreed to organise a formal marriage next week," said Bharati Das, who is now busy arranging bridal gifts (dowry) for her daughter. The worrying aspect of teenage marriage practice in the community is that if at some point of time the would-be in-laws feel the bride lacks the physical ability to perform daily household assignments or the mental attitude to match the groom's mindset and theirs', the proposal gets rejected. "After the engagement, we send our daughter to work in the in-laws' house in the daytime and give them the freedom to mingle with the groom," Bharati said. This period, which is almost like a probation before marriage, is of concern for the bride's family. Due to this free interaction, girls often risk dangerous pregnancies. Once a girl becomes pregnant, family members of the bride are left with no option but to adhere to the terms set by the groom's family. "This is a tradition we have been following since time immemorial. Although the community is aware of the legal implications of child marriage, we don't have leadership to assert and put an end to the practice," said Shankar Das, a member of snake charmer community of Padmaksharipur. Jyotsna, a mother, said, "Since the marriage has to take place within the community which is confined to a single village in Odisha, the bride's family has to look for a suitable groom. The desperation for a groom within the community, which has a higher percentage of girls forces the parents to opt for early marriage." Many girls give birth long before they are physically and emotionally ready. Bharati, who is in her late thirties, already has a large family having several grandsons and granddaughters. The 752-family-strong community, which has lost the main occupation after a ban on snake charming, is now finding it difficult to eke out a living. While many end up begging, some daily wagers from the community seek solace in alcohol. (The Hindu 18/2/15)

### **2,091 missing children traced in Mumbai (14)**

MUMBAI: The city police have traced 2,091 children out of 2,527 children who went missing in 2014 in the special drive to trace the missing children. Interestingly out of this 2,091 traced children 1,249 are girls alone and rest are boys in the age group of 2 to 15 and 16 years old. According to the statistics the 2013 there were 2,979 children including girls and boys went missing and out of which police traced 2,243 out of which while 968 of them were boys and 1275 were girls. Police said that around 10 percent of children are still missing and they are doing their best to trace them. Many of these children were found begging outside religious places and some of them were push into child labour. Police said that this year in last two months they have traced 137 children. The tracing children began in November after Mumbai Police Commissioner Rakesh Maria announced the special drive to trace missing persons. "We have started the

special drive to trace missing girls and boys under the age of 18. I have asked our teams to go back to 10 years and track each missing child," Maria had said. Now every police station there are atleast three to four policemen who are dedicated only to trace the missing children. Maria has also announced a cash rewards for the police team which traces a child. (Times of India 22/2/15)

#### **Centre to Make Amendments to Child Labour Act: Minister (14)**

HYDERABAD: The Union government is all set to make amendments in the Child Labour (Prohibition and regulation) Act 1986 to enforce stricter punishment to the violators in the ensuing budget session of the Parliament slated to begin from Monday. Speaking to newsmen here on Saturday, Union labour and employment minister Bandaru Dattatreya said the Bill would be introduced in the budget session to prevent the practice of employing children below 14 years and prohibiting adolescents( 14 to 18 years of age)in hazardous occupations. Besides the legislative actions, he said the Union labour ministry had undertaken programme called the National Child Labour Project for rehabilitating working children in 270 districts in the country. Around 6,000 special training centres, under the said project, was providing non-formal(bridge)education, vocational training, stipend of Rs 150 per month among other facilities to enrolled children. The project is being operational in eight districts of Telangana, he added. An amendment to the Factories Act, 1948 and Small Factories (Regulation of Employment and Condition of Service) Bill will also come up before the Parliament in this budget session, the minister informed. "Although Factories Act vests the power of enforcing the provisions of the said Act with the state governments, any amendments to the Act proposed by states require the consent of the President of India. To bring more flexibility to this, we are bringing an amendment," he explained. Dattatreya said the new Small Factories (Regulation of Employment and Condition of Service) Bill is aimed at regulating factories with workforce less than 40. Terrorist Activities: Dattatreya lamented that Hyderabad has become a nerve centre for terrorism and terro-related activities in the country. In order to prevent the same, he demanded the TRS government to release a white paper on the efforts made to contain such acts. "The government should appoint a DGP-level officer to keep a vigil on the terrorist activities in the city," he appealed to the government. He expressed sympathy with the kin of those killed in Dilshuknagar blasts, that rocked the city two years ago on this day. Taking a dig at the MIM, he said some political parties were making provocative speeches using religion for their political benefits. (New Indian Express 22/2/15)

#### **Why paper laws and policies are inadequate to bring reforms on child rights (14)**

Despite a number of legislations aimed at improving children's conditions in India, not much has changed in reality, explains Puja Marwaha. Children may constitute 40 percent of the population, but they are not a vote bank. It is therefore no surprise that child rights reforms are moving forward at a snail's pace. While there are policies and laws on paper, on the ground, India is still miles away from being the child-friendly nation it committed to be, when it ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Even the money spent for reforms remains poor: in the 25th year of the CRC, child welfare was allocated just 4.64 per cent of the annual budget. In the South Asian Report on Child Friendliness of Governments of 2013, India tops the list in just one category i.e. legal and policy framework. But overall, it scores lower than countries like Maldives, Sri Lanka and Bhutan and is ranked fourth among eight nations—the other four being Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. India's gender equality record is particularly dismal; it managed to better only Afghanistan's score. Obviously, mere enactment of laws has not helped in areas such as education, health and protection. While there are several laws to deal with protection of child rights, the legal remedies needed to deal with violations of these laws are often not in place. For instance, there is no one law that explicitly bans all forms of corporal punishment across settings. Although the Right To Education (RTE) Act bans corporal punishment in schools, it does not talk of a mechanism for its implementation across schools. In June 2014, the CRC committee in its observations on India reiterates "great concern regarding reports of widespread violence, abuse and neglect of

children. This includes family settings, alternative care institutions, schools, and the community.” The committee recommends that India should prohibit corporal punishment and “ensure that legal proceedings are systematically initiated against those responsible for ill-treating children.” As for the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012— experts feel that it is a law that’s skewed against children. It criminalises even consensual sex among those below 18 years, leading to a large number of rape cases being filed against boys mostly by the girls’ parents, who take undue advantage of the Act to end a relationship they don’t approve of. On the other hand, forced sex on married minor girls of ages above 15 by their husbands is condoned since the Criminal Law Amendment Act 2013 does not recognise marital rape. The CRC committee has pointed out that the non-criminalisation of sexual abuse of minor married girls above 15 “is inconsistent” with POCSO. It has asked the government to ensure that sexual abuses in such cases are also criminalised. With reports of sexual abuse of children on the rise in schools and homes across the country, the CRC committee has asked the government to establish mechanisms, procedures and guidelines to ensure mandatory reporting of all cases of child sexual abuse as well as necessary measures to ensure proper investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators. With surrogacy on the rise in India, there are also a few concerns regarding a child’s rights in such an arrangement. What if a child is rejected due to issues such as disability, gender or complexion? The CRC committee has asked the government to ensure that the Assisted Reproductive Technology Bill (or any other legislation to be developed) helps regulate surrogacy and prevent its abuse. Illegal adoptions must also be stopped with appropriate legislation. There are concerns about the Child Labour Act, 1986 too. In the absence of a national database on the types and extent of child labour, which occurs not just in informal sectors such as domestic work, but also in hazardous ones including mining and quarry work, it may be difficult to eliminate this national shame. While thousands of children continue to be employed, there are no regular inspections, and thus prosecutions and convictions are abysmally low. According to Census 2011 data, only 1061 convictions were reported in 2013 despite more than one crore children engaged as labourers. In addition, the rehabilitation of rescued children also lacks any comprehensive strategy or plan. One conclusion that emerges clearly from the current scenario is that if child rights is to be given the importance it deserves, the government needs to go beyond enacting laws and drive change at the ground level. (DNA 24/2/15)

### **Combatting the Vicious Circle of Child Rights Violation (14)**

CHENNAI:When a person from the largely stigmatised Kuravar community was picked up by the police in Madurai two weeks back for alleged robbery, the effect was felt by his child. Lakshmi (name changed), his 13-year-old daughter, stopped going to school as a result of the snide remarks she faced. With widespread caste discrimination and branding of communities, the effect on the rights of children can be seen in instances across the country — Dalit children being made to sweep classrooms and clean toilets at schools, eat separately and face neglect. The constant branding by teachers and classmates as the ‘other’, besides affecting the psyche of the child has been shown to increase the number of dropouts and the cycle goes on — child labour, drug abuse, alcoholism and crime. The issue of child rights is universal but the discrimination is more in India because of the socio-religious philosophy that facilitates discrimination on the basis of caste, believes social activist Vasanthi Devi, former chairperson, Institute for Human Rights Education. “Dalit children have special needs and this is not accepted by most people. Children in schools face the same issues the adults of the caste face, ” said N Thayalan, director of Human Resource Development Foundation (HRDF). Pallar, Paraiyar, and Arunthathiyar are the major Dalit groups in the State. A 2010 survey was conducted among 200 Arunthathiyar families, the group engaged in manual scavenging and considered lowest, the ‘Dalits among Dalits’. This survey conducted by the Arunthathiyar Human Rights Forum revealed that 24 per cent of children dropped out from schools, starting from Class 1 and reaching a maximum at Class 8. The top reason given by students for dropping out was slow learning followed by peer group influence, family incompetence, teachers’ attitude

and a difficult syllabus. While children may not completely comprehend the underlying factors behind this inferiority complex, around 20 per cent of the teachers quoted caste discrimination as a reason for dropouts, although the top reason was inadequate staff followed by poor parental care and economic factors. Frequent migration by parents, the occupation of the parents as manual scavengers, and the disturbed environment at home increases the chance of dropping out. "The maximum percentage of dropouts come from the SC/ST community. Children who go to school are at impressionable age and extra attention needs to be paid to counter their vulnerability," says Shantha Sinha, Chairperson, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and founder of the Andhra-based MV Foundation. The majority of students in government schools are often from marginalised communities but the schools often have poor facilities where teachers are not sensitised to non-discrimination. "The moment they step into the school, they feel the hostility. Teachers referring to them by caste names and treating them with contempt is common," Vasanthi Devi says. A subtle difference in the dialect that these children use is often mocked by others. Schools with a majority of SC/ST students get branded as 'rowdy' schools with teachers who work there constantly looking for better jobs. "Should Dalit children not be there in the heart of the city?" asks Virgil D'samy, director of Arunodaya, a foundation working for street and working children. The issues of post eviction dropouts and child labour are intertwined, she says. "Should the city only have glass buildings and house one section of society?" The State Government is trying to tackle the issues of children from backward communities through scholarships, Adi Dravidar schools and hostels, and provision of free study material. There are 1397 Adi Dravidar schools and 1304 hostels in the State, with around 90 per cent of these being in rural areas. Over 1,70,000 children study in the schools, and 10 more college hostels have been added this year. "The department conducts the Manithaneya Vara Vizha event with community feasts and programmes to create awareness about untouchability," said the official. The post matric scheme covers college fees for all students who clear eligibility and 10 students from each block on the basis of merit are given scholarships for private schools. (New Indian express 2/3/15)

#### **Children's share in budget falling: Study (14)**

Guwahati, March 3: Child rights are a raging issue in Assam but the share of the state's budget for children has reduced in the past two years, says a study by two NGOs - Northeast Social Research Centre and HAQ Centre for Child Rights, New Delhi. It said the 2014-15 budget share for children decreased to 3.17 per cent compared to 3.49 per cent in 2013-14, though the state budget allocation increased by nearly 28 per cent during the same period. Children's share in the budget in 2012-13 was 3.31 per cent. The study, Assam Child Budget 2014-15, by Kanu Kanta Sen and Farhana Yasmin, researchers of the two NGOs, was conducted because there is no separate mention of the monetary allocation for children in the budget. "What is alarming is that the share for child health was only 0.39 per cent within the budget for children in the current year. Both vital sectors of health and protection have been found to be given lowest priority," said the report. Education received maximum attention - 95.26 per cent of the budget for children in 2014-15 while health received only 0.39 per cent followed by 4 per cent for development and 0.35 per cent for child protection. "Despite the inadequate health services and poor health condition of children in the state, the child health sector witnessed about 18 per cent reduction in the 2014-15 budget compared to the previous year," the report said. It also found negligence of the issue of child protection in the budget. It noted that an increasing number of children in the state were missing, faced violence, physical and sexual abuse. The Juvenile Justice Act, which covers children in need of care and protection, has been provided with a minimum allocation of Rs 74 lakh which is almost 58 per cent less than the fund released under the scheme during 2013-14. The Integrated Child Protection Scheme meant for preventing violation of child rights failed to receive any central funding during the year, though it received Rs 43.2 crore in the previous year. However, the state's share under the scheme was Rs 1.18 crore in 2014-15, said the report. The report said one of the important factors for the decreasing share in the budget for children was under-utilisation of the funds allocated for children by various departments. Expressing concern over the trend, the founder-director of Northeast Social Research

Centre, Walter Fernandes, said government departments dealing with child related issues should work for more budgetary allocation of funds for children. (The Teleraph 4/3/15)

### **Mumbai NGO arranges 'ghar wapasi' of lost-and-found kids (14)**

Mumbai: A Mumbai NGO, My Home India, has successfully arranged the 'ghar wapasi' (homecoming) of 170 lost-and-found kids who were languishing in various shelters here, an official said on Friday. The kids aged between 14-16, including nearly 100 girls, were lured from their homes with employment promises and pushed into low-paying jobs or the flesh trade, said Mithilesh Jha, national coordinator for the programme entitled 'Sapno Se Apno Tak'. "In the past one year, we have managed to contact the families of these minors all over India, including the north-eastern states, and four from Nepal. Later, we arranged to hand them over to their respective families and bore their travel expenses," Jha told IANS. Of the 75 from the north-eastern states, a whopping 67 young girls from Assam were brought to Mumbai with promises of jobs and then forced into prostitution. Four children from Delhi and others from Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha and Karnataka were engaged in exploitative child labour. These children, given up as 'lost' or dead by their families back home in remote areas, were found by the Mumbai Police after which My Home India swung into action. Earlier, the NGO chief Sunil Deodhar said that daily many innocent children run away from their homes or are lost and come to metros like Mumbai with dreams of making it big. "They land in wrong company and are compelled to work as child labour, indulge in petty crimes, begging, etc. We try to save the young unfortunate kids and re-unite them with their families as we firmly believe they are the future of India," Deodhar said. Deodhar called on Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and apprised him of the NGO's activities. Impressed by the effort, Deodhar said Fadnavis has assured My Home India of getting a link-up with various children's remand homes in Maharashtra. Buoyed by the success, Deodhar now plans to expand the NGO's activity on a national scale to help more such lost-and-found children. Jha said My Home India presently has a network of 40 teams across major cities in the country which secure the details of such children. He explained that there are multiple reasons for children getting 'lost' or running away from their homes. "A few are blinded by the glamour of Bollywood, some are ill-treated at home, others escape torture by one or two step-parents... A majority of them face deep emotional problems and they reveal their home addresses only after months of counselling and cajoling," Jha said. (Business Standard 6/3/15)

### **'Legal System Needs to Back Kids' (14)**

CHENNAI: Children, especially those from marginalised communities, need proper schools and a better education system to keep them away from child labour and be integrated into the mainstream, feel activists. In addition, as the focus shifts from a welfare-based approach to a rights-based approach, the laws that protect children become tantamount. For children to be treated as citizens and become entitled to their rights, courts too need to take better notice of them, say activists. Better provisions in the court and stricter implementation of laws are seen as the way forward. Law implementation is also crucial, as often, the children in question do not have the resources or a supportive guardian to come to the court and fight. For instance, in child marriage cases, the girl can only approach the court on her own after she is 18, and since the family is involved in the marriage, the girl ends up having no voice. Better provisions in the court for children too are being looked at as a necessity. "For one, child counsellors are a necessity. In the family court, the rights of the child are looked at by the judge based on the welfare of the child," says Sheila Jayaprakash, an advocate. The child, in case of a disturbed domestic environment, could be confused and needs proper counselling. "There must be a provision for a child counsellor whom the child can speak to, like in issues of domestic violence." Strict enforcement and proper punishments are the answer, and a uniform age without exception, in cases like child labour is necessary, believe lawyers (Children above the age of 14, for instance, don't come under the ambit of Child Labour Act in certain cases). "Exemptions always breed illegality. Strict action is a must," she adds. (New Indian Express 10/3/15)

### **India's 13 million child brides, their 6 million children (14)**

Nearly 17 million Indian children between the ages of 10 and 19—6% of the age group—are married, many of them to older men, newly-released census figures reveal. This is an increase of 0.9 million from the 2001 census figure. The legal age for marriage is 18, so some involved may have been adults, but it is unlikely both partners were. Of these married children, 76%, or 12.7 million, are girls, according to census data. Only four million boys in this age group are married, reinforcing the fact that girls are significantly more disadvantaged. More boys were married in 2011 at 4 million compared to 3.4 million in 2001. The number is constant for girls. Uttar Pradesh has the most married children (2.8 million), followed by Bihar and Rajasthan (with 1.6 million each). IndiaSpend has previously reported that India is ranked 6th among the top 10 countries that report child marriages among females. Since the number of married boys is much lower than that of girls, it is clear girls are marrying older men. For example, Uttar Pradesh has 2 million married girls in the age group of 10-19 years, while 2.8 million in total (boys & girls) are married in the age group; Girls account for 71% of the total married people in this group. It's the same for other states. Source: Census; shapefile from Datameet; Six million children were born to couples married in the age group of 10-19. The majority of these children were boys (3 million). Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of children born to children: 1 million. A UNICEF study pointed that early marriage hinders educational attainment, which then leads to poor maternal health and higher infant mortality rates. Child-bearing at a young age is detrimental to the health of both the mother and the infant. This is why child marriage affects women more than men, other than the fact that men are less likely to be married as children. India's maternal mortality ratio (the number of women who die during pregnancy and childbirth per 100,000 live births) has gone down from 254 in 2006 to 190 in 2014, but it is still higher than the ratio in most other countries. Infant mortality rate (number of infant deaths for every 1,000 live births) has come down from 68 in 2000 to 56 in 2014, but is still too high and short of human-development targets. States with higher child marriage rates report higher maternal as well as infant deaths. The exception is Maharashtra which has a high rate of child marriage but still maintains a low maternal mortality ratio of 68. The reason for this could be improved healthcare services, as this IndiaSpend report has explained. Married children are part of the 47% of India's population that is currently married. The age group of 35-39 years had the highest number of married men with 40.2 million, and the age bracket of 25-29 years had the highest number of married women with 44.6 million. (Business Standard 11/3/15)

### **27 kids, mostly girls, rescued from bonded labour in Ajmer (14)**

AJMER: At least 27 children, who were working as bonded labourers in a poly packing industry at Palara village near here, were rescued on Wednesday. The freed children include 24 girls. "We received a call three days ago and we conducted a recce of the area. We passed on the information to police and also to the labour department," said Nanu Lal Prajapati, district coordinator of child helpline. The rescued children belong to nearby villages of Badgav, Sandaria, Kalyanipura and Palara. They were all from poor families and were working for 12 to 14 hours a day in a poly packing industry. Most of the children were girls and in the age group of 8 to 14 years. "We found that these children were working there for the past seven months and were kept in the factory premises in shabby conditions and were paid wages of Rs 55 to 60 for working 12 to 14 hours," said Prajapati. During medical examination, most of the children were found underweight and malnourished. The rescued children were produced before Bal Kalyan Samiti which handed over these children to their families. Meanwhile, sources said that as the state government have no rehabilitation programme for child labourers, things are not improving, "As poverty is the main reason for child labour, rescuing them and handing back to the family means snatching a little food from them and returning them back to bonded labour," said a specialist. (Times of India 12/3/15)

### **57 rescued children sent back home (14)**

HYDERABAD: Fifty seven child labourers from West Bengal, who were rescued from different workshops in old city, were sent back to their native place on Sunday. Of the 57 children, 30 were rescued from a bag making unit at Nawab Sahab Kunta in Falaknuma, while the remaining were rescued from goldsmith workshops in Gulzar Houz and Charminar. They were kept at the Government Observation Home for the last two months. "We contacted the West Bengal government and after completing necessary formalities, we are handing over the children to them," District Child Protection Officer, Md Imtiyaz Raheem said, adding that the West Bengal government will look into the rehabilitation aspect of the children. The children were taken in a special bogie arranged in the East Coast Express by South Central Railway authorities. Officials of Child and Welfare Department, Government Railway Police and NGO's representatives are accompanying them. (The Hindu 16/3/15)

### **Child slavery 'most heinous crime against humanity': Satyarthi (14)**

United Nations: Describing child slavery as the "most heinous crime against humanity," Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi on Tuesday called for a greater political will in the global development agenda to bring an end to the scourge affecting millions of children worldwide. Satyarthi told the UN that the number of child slaves has not decreased in the last few decades, but has stagnated at about 5.5 million. "We have not made progress in (ending) the most heinous crime against humanity. The most shameful commentary on the present times on the society is child slavery still exists." Satyarthi was at the UN headquarters for a special briefing organised by the NGO Relations Section, Outreach Division, Department of Public Information (DPI). The Nobel Peace Prize winner said there must be explicit language in the sustainable development goals to abolish child slavery. He gave examples of several young boys and girls whom he rescued from bonded labour, saying their childhood and sense of innocence is lost when they are exploited and subjected to physical and sexual abuse. The question of abolishing child slavery and restoring the childhood of millions of boys and girls has to be answered with "utmost political will, utmost priority, we have to feel inside us the sense of urgency," he said. Satyarthi, the founder of grassroots non-profit 'Bachpan Bachao Andolan', said nations must come up with innovative ways and build strongest possible partnerships to put an end to child slavery. He called for strengthening the UN system and stressed that there is a serious need of deeper and broader inter- agency cooperation. "We have to bring the UN agencies closer for a holistic policy thinking and responses to the problems of children in the world," he said appealing to the UN to be more "proactive" in building partnerships with the other stakeholders. Satyarthi expressed hope that the scourge of child labour can end in his lifetime but said that concerted efforts from governments, corporates, civil society and public was needed. "I am very confident that I will see the end of child servitude in my lifetime. It was a non-issue 30 years ago... I refuse to accept that some children are born to live without human dignity and without their rights. We cannot compromise, it is non-negotiable," he said. Satyarthi said there has been progress over the last few years to tackle child labour and everyone has a "moral responsibility" to end it. (Zee News 18/3/15)

### **Modi invokes farmers' children to pitch for Land Bill (14)**

Hussainiwala (Punjab): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday invoked the welfare of farmers' children to justify the Land Bill as he maintained that efforts are being made to "mislead" the farming community over the new measure. Pitching for the proposed new legislation that is facing stiff resistance from almost all opposition parties, he said it is necessary to bring about development which will benefit the farmers and their families as well. "Efforts are being made to mislead farmers in various ways. I talked about it yesterday also in my 'Mann Ki Baat' programme," Mr. Modi said addressing an event organised in the memory of freedom fighters Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru on their martyrdom day. He said if the nation makes progress, it will benefit the farmers as well as their future generations, many of whom want employment in areas other than farming. "If there is no development, what will happen to your children? Do you want them to live in 'jhuggi jhopris' (slums) of Delhi and Mumbai? Development will bring benefits for the farmer, their children as well as their villages," the Prime Minister said. The controversial Bill was

passed by Lok Sabha earlier this month but has got stuck in Rajya Sabha because of a united opposition which has stepped up its campaign against the measure. Talking about corruption, he said it had "destroyed" the country. Targeting the previous UPA government, he said that the coal-block allocation scam was "bigger" than assessed by the CAG. He said that the CAG's assessment of the loss in the coal-block allocation scam was much less than what it actually was. When the CAG concluded that the loss was to the tune of Rs. 1.86 lakh crore, there was "disbelief about such a huge figure". "There was also a 'zero loss theory'," he said targeting the previous UPA ministers who had contended so. After the scam came to light, Supreme Court cancelled the allocation of 204 coal blocks, the Prime Minister noted. "This happened as soon as we came to power. It was their sin but we faced a situation where power plants were about to face closure on account of lack of coal. So, we decided to go for auction. "Out of 204 coal blocks cancelled, only 20 have been auctioned so far and more than 180 are still left. Since an honest government is in place, Rs two lakh crore was deposited in the national treasury on account of auction of these 20 coal blocks," Mr. Modi said, adding that it will benefit the poor. Slamming the previous Congress-led government without naming it, he said, "They left no areas" (in terms of corruption). "LED bulbs were purchased in 2014 at Rs. 300 apiece. When we came, we decided the rate of a bulb should be Rs. 80 each. So on each bulb, we saved Rs. 220. You brought us here because of our honesty, we did it," Mr. Modi told the gathering. He also talked about the "crisis" being faced by farmers, first on account of deficit rainfall last year and now due to hailstorm, and promised to do all that his government can along with the states. He said he had told his ministers to get an assessment conducted of the losses. "A survey has started. The states and the Centre are with you in this crisis situation. We will not hesitate in giving whatever help we can," the Prime Minister said. At the same time, he referred to his government's new scheme -- Soil Health Card Yojana -- and said it is aimed at benefiting the farmers as they can assess how much water and fertilisers they require for farming their land. He also announced that a new horticulture research institute to be set up in Amritsar would be named after Bhagat Singh. (The Hindu 23/3/15)

#### **ISIS recruits 400 children since January: Report (14)**

BEIRUT: Islamic State has recruited at least 400 children in Syria in the past three months and given these so-called "Cubs of the Caliphate" military training and hardline indoctrination, a monitoring group said on Tuesday. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the children, all aged under 18, were recruited near schools, mosques and in public areas where Islamic State carries out killings and brutal punishments on local people. One such young boy appeared in a video early this month shooting dead an Israeli Arab accused by Islamic State of being a spy. A French police source said the boy might be the half-brother of Mohamed Merah, who killed three soldiers, a rabbi and three Jewish children in Toulouse in 2012. "They use children because it is easy to brainwash them. They can build these children into what they want, they stop them from going to school and send them to IS schools instead," said Rami Abdulrahman, head of the British-based Observatory. Islamic State declared a caliphate last year in territory it controls in Syria and Iraq and is being targeted by U.S.-led air strikes in both countries. It has beheaded or shot dead Syrian civilians, combatants, foreign aid workers and journalists and has released videos appearing to show children witnessing or participating in some of the killings. The group persecutes people across sects and ethnicities who do not adhere to its ultra-hardline doctrine. The group may be resorting to children because it has been having difficulties recruiting adults since the start of the year, with only 120 joining its ranks, Abdulrahman said. This was partly due to tighter controls on the Turkish border, where foreign fighters tend to enter, he added. Islamic State has encouraged parents to send children to training camps or has recruited them without their parents' consent, often luring them with money, said the Observatory, which tracks the conflict using sources on the ground. At the training camps, the children learn to fire live ammunition, fight in battles and to drive, it said. Islamic State also recruits children as informants and as guards for its headquarters as well as welcoming children with birth defects into its ranks, the Observatory added. (Times of India 24/3/15)

### **CBSE glare on sexual abuse in schools (14)**

The Central Board of Secondary Education has moved to check sexual abuse of schoolchildren on campuses after taking a tough stand on cyber-bullying and ragging. The board, last week, issued a circular to all affiliated schools to ensure no child suffered from this crime and listed out certain steps as preventive measures. Defining the Protection of Child from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, the circular reads: "The challenges of gender inequality, eve teasing and sexual abuse in school environment call for increased awareness and creating synergy among parents, teachers and schools. In order to ensure strict compliance of the Protection of Child from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, the CBSE has taken several initiatives and actions for creating awareness about sexual exploitation of schoolchildren." The board has suggested schools to form a committee, which may consist of principal/vice-principal, one male teacher, one female teacher, one female student, one male student and one non-teaching employee. The panel would serve as a complaints and redressal body. However, improved response system and alert administrative machinery is required to take immediate action on reported cases of misbehaviour. "We have a student council where we have boys and girls of the school, the vice-principal and male and female teachers. The council looks after problems faced by the students and conveys it to the school administration," said Anita Chaudhary, principal, Tribhuvan School. The CBSE has asked the schools to report sexual abuse as soon as the institutions come to know about it. The board has made training compulsory for teachers to attend to adolescent (gender) related issues, conduct of adolescent education programmes and special activities that promote gender equality and sensitivity. The notice also states: Camps on sensitisation of girls on health and sanitation issues, karate/self-defence training should be conducted at regular intervals. Programmes like folk dance, nukkad natak, poster competitions, quiz, debate, and exhibition can also be conducted to foster gender equality". "Last week, a leading Patna-based school was involved in the issue. This stringent step of the board will check these kinds of activities inside the campus," said Shingini Singh, a Class IX student of Radiant International. Schools have been also asked to put up complaint/suggestion box so that students can make written complaints. (The Telegraph 25/3/15)

### **Provide affordable public transport for students from slums: child rights panel (14)**

Mumbai: The Maharashtra government should provide affordable public transport facilities, so that children of slum residents can travel to schools, the Maharashtra State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (MSCPCR) has recommended. The commission recently passed an order saying as per the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, it is the duty of the state government to arrange public transport services for children living in slums, so they can access schools. The order was given in connection to a case filed by Door Step School, an organisation based in Grant Road. The organisation had complained that several places in the city such as Ganesh Murthi Nagar, Babasaheb Ambedkar Nagar, Shiv Shakti Nagar in Backbay, Cuffe Parade – where a majority of residents belong to the scheduled castes and tribes or other backward classes – do not have access to schools. "A majority of children who are residing in these slums are in the 6-8 age group, and so they cannot travel on their own. Their parents are daily wage workers and are unable to accompany them," reads the complaint filed by the organisation. "So BEST bus services are required at concessional rates in these areas." Many children were being deprived of school education as their parents could not afford to pay the hiked BEST fare, which goes against the provisions of the RTE Act, the complaint stated. "It is the duty of the state under the RTE Act to provide education to children between 6-14 years and cheap public transport services to access that education," said AN Tripathi, secretary of the commission. (The Hindustan Times 27/3/15)

### **Call to implement rights of children aged 14-18 (14)**

VELLORE: The central and state governments should ensure implementation of rights for children in the age group of 14-18 who are not covered by the existing laws, according to R. Vidyasaagar, Child Protection Specialist of UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). Delivering the keynote address at the inaugural function of the two-day UNICEF-sponsored Workshop on Child Rights Implementation with a Focus on Child Protection Issues organized jointly by the School of Social Sciences and Languages (SSL) and VIT Business School (VITBS) of the VIT University here on Monday, Mr. Vidyasaagar said that while existing laws such as the Right To Education Act and the Child Labour Abolition Act covered children below the age of 14, children in the 14-18 age group also face problems such as child marriage, child labour, sexual abuse, addiction to liquor, drugs and smoking, and suicides caused by the above problems. About 40-50 per cent of the children in the 14-18 age group dropped out despite free education and education aids. Because of this, they went into the informal labour market. "So, protection of the rights of children in the 14-18 age group should be covered through new laws and policies", he said. The UNICEF specialist said that most of the existing vocational education courses are theoretical, and they are taught vocational skills which are not required by the industry. The demand for vocational skills is increasing in the newly emerging sectors. Noting that the Vision 2020 of the Tamil Nadu government envisaged creation of one crore skilled manpower, he said that this skill creation should be based on the demands. Mr. Vidyasaagar said that India had the unique population advantage wherein 40 % of the children are in the age group of 14-18. Unless measures were taken to address the problems of the children in this age group, it would not be possible for the country to reap the benefits of this demographic dividend. Laws and policies for this age group should be framed after eliciting the views of the children in the above age group on the problems confronted by them, he said. G. Viswanathan, VIT Chancellor who inaugurated the workshop said that it had been organised in association with UNICEF in order to create awareness among the college students about the problems such as beggary among children and the social problems they encountered on account of poverty. The workshop should also deliberate on what the central and state governments and educational institutions could do to prevent and address the problems properly, he said. John Sundar David, Dean, SSL welcomed the august gathering. G. Karunanithi, Professor, SSL introduced the theme of the workshop. Kalyani Rangarajan, Dean, VITBS spoke. Suresh Mariaselvam of VITBS proposed a vote of thanks. About 200 students from VIT and other colleges in and around Vellore participated in the workshop. (The Hindu 1/4/15)

#### **Child marriage (14)**

Madurai): The act prohibiting child marriages is not against Muslim personal law and will prevail over the latter as it has been passed for the welfare of girl children, Madras High Court has held. The court dismissed a PIL seeking a direction to officials not to interfere in marriages solemnised under the Muslim personal law by invoking the Prohibition of Child Marriages Act of 2006, which bars marriage of girls below 18 years of age. According to the petitioner, the personal law allows marriage of Muslim girls between 15 and 18. "The Prohibition of Child Marriages Act is not against Muslim personal law. The act enacted for the welfare of the girl children prevails over the personal law. The former helps the girls get education, empowerment etc," a division bench of Justices S. Tamilvanan and V.S. Ravi said in its order yesterday. The PIL filed by Social Democratic Party of India leader Mohammed Abbas had challenged the action of a district social welfare officer stopping the proposed marriage of a 16-year old girl. (The Telegraph 2/4/15)

#### **Family, child rights activists decry police insensitivity (14)**

NOIDA: Child rights activists joined the family of the three-year-old in raising questions about the style of functioning of the police, after parents filed a complaint suspecting their child had been sexually assaulted. The girl was questioned by male cops, who made her confront the security guard of the kindergarten, one of those suspected of carrying out the assault on Thursday, a family member said. DSP Raj Kumar Mishra said, "I'm not aware of any goof-ups during the probe. We'll take stringent action

against any cop found guilty." Talking to TOI, a family member of the girl said four cops, three of whom were male, questioned the child for half an hour and made her confront a security guard of the kindergarten. "From the beginning, the cops have been trying to hush up. Of the four who questioned her, the single female was a junior and thus hardly involved in the proceedings. The sight of our child being grilled by the burly men after having undergone mental trauma was heartbreaking," he said. A family friend said, "Afterwards, they made her face the security guard and asked her if she knew him. Obviously, she could hardly speak." "With a medical examination already done at a private hospital, there was no need of another test. Even district hospital staff agreed there was no need for a fresh medical examination, yet the cops insisted on it," he said. Child rights activist Satyaprakash, of NGO FXB India Suraksha Childline, said police should show sensitivity in such cases. "After lodging an FIR, they should have roped in child activists. Police have little understanding of ways to deal with children, whose trauma is of primary importance here." Neelima Pandey of Plan India questioned the cops' insistence on a second medical test. "Under POCSO Act, 2012, medical test at a private hospital is admissible. Government hospitals anyway show little sensitivity in cases involving kids, like for example avoiding the two-finger test. With this sort of probe, police ensure the child is traumatized by the time she reaches court," Pandey said. (Times of India 4/4/15)

### **Govt planning to relax laws to allow children below age 14 to work in select family businesses**

New Delhi: The government plans to relax child labour laws and allow children below the age of 14 to work in select family enterprises if it doesn't hamper their education, saying it wants to encourage learning at home as it leads to entrepreneurship. A draft provision in the Child Labour Prohibition Act says the prohibition on child labour will not apply if they are helping the family in fields, forests and home-based work after school hours or during vacations, or while attending technical institutions. The new norm will also apply to the entertainment industry and sports except the circus, a proposal by the labour ministry says. In addition, children between 14 and 18 years will not be allowed to work in hazardous industries. "We don't want to redraw the social fabric of Indian society where children learn by participating in work with family elders. We, instead, want to encourage learning work at home as it leads to entrepreneurship," said a government official. Family businesses have been given a wide definition and cover any job, profession, or business performed primarily by family members. This will especially help poor families where children help in family subsistence, officials said. Child right activists, however, have opposed the move, saying the proposal could be used to deny education to the girl child, whose school drop-out rate is almost double than that of boys, and can hamper the government's bid to provide elementary education to all children below 14 years. India has seen a sharp drop in the number of child labourers in the last decade, down to 4.3 million from 12.6 million, according to census data. Child rights activists, however, dispute the numbers, saying the decline is due to under-reporting because of fear of prosecution but officials crediting the improvement to increased school enrolment. A large number of child labourers continue to work in several industries such as fireworks, matchboxes, footwear and carpet making, where children are in high demand owing to their nimble fingers, necessary for intricate designs. Activists say children are often preferred because they can be forced to work long hours with poor pay. The original child labour law banned the employment of children below 14 in only 18 hazardous industries but the UPA government in 2012 proposed to extend the ban to all industries. They also introduced a new category of adolescents -- 14 to 18 years -- who were banned from hazardous industries but allowed to work in other sectors. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Bill, 2012, introduced in the Rajya Sabha, recommended a complete ban on child labour until they finish elementary education, guaranteed under the Right To Education Act. The amendments were welcomed by activists but were seen by many as an "inspector raj" that gave labour department officials a permit to harass small businesses and farmers. The changes were re-examined by the new government due to apprehensions of misuse and fears that they could upset the social fabric of the country. These were also the reasons given by the labour ministry while rejecting a parliamentary committee recommendation that barred children from

helping parents in domestic chores, saying the ban could be reframed to prohibit employment in all occupations. The ministry also rejected a proposal to make elementary education a must for employment of adolescents in non-hazardous industries, pointing out that a separate law existed to guarantee education. Labour minister Bandaru Dattatreya announced last week the government would be introducing amendments to the Child Labour Prohibition Act in the ongoing winter session. The ministry has prepared to proposal to seek the cabinet's approval and it is expected to be considered soon. (Hindustan Times 9/4/15)

#### **Changes to child labour law give erring parents a breather (14)**

New Delhi: In an effort to provide a human touch to the Child Labour Prohibition Act, the government has proposed that a parent will not be booked for the first offence under law the in which punishment — both jail term and penalty — is being increased manifold. The proposal circulated by the labour ministry says a parent should not be booked for the first offence and action should be taken for subsequent violations. "A parent may have allowed his child to work, unaware of the law. The same rule cannot apply if he is caught again," a senior government official said, adding that parents were being given the benefit of doubt. The reason behind the provision is that child labourers mostly hail from extremely poor families where parents are not educated enough to understand the nuances of law. The provision will also check their possible harassment. The government also believes that parents should be given a chance to correct themselves, a view child rights activists say will promote child labour rather than curb it. The amendment bill likely to be introduced in the second part of the Budget session will also increase the fine by over five times from the present Rs 10,000. For the first offence by the employer, the proposed fine is Rs 50,000 which can be increased to Rs 1 lakh for subsequent offences. The government is also proposing an increase in jail term for repeated offenders for up to two years from the present six months. There are also plans to set up a district-level fund to provide relief up to Rs 15,000 to each child labour victim. The government has also prescribed a mechanism to ensure the child secures admission to a school and is rehabilitated. However, those in the field of rehabilitation say unless a system to ensure quick transfer of funds from the state where the child was found working to his native state is worked out, the district-level fund will not do much. (Hindustan Times 12/4/15)

#### **Child rights panel seeks reports (14)**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The Kerala State Child Rights Commission has sought reports on the issues of parents marrying off their minor girl to a moneylender in Idukki and also on the instances of sexual harassment of minor tribal girls at Ambalavayal in Wayanad. The commission asked the Idukki District Collector to submit a report on the marriage of a minor girl to a moneylender and the Wayanad district police chief on the sexual harassment issue. They had been told to submit the reports before April 17. (The Hindu 13/4/15)

#### **Millions of Middle East children out of school, UN warns (14)**

BEIRUT: More than 12 million children in the Middle East are not being educated despite advances in efforts to expand schooling, the UN children's agency Unicef said on Wednesday. The figure does not include children forced from school by the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, who would bring the total not receiving an education to 15 million, the agency said in a new report. The joint report by Unicef and UN cultural agency Unesco's Institute for Statistics praises the "considerable resources and political capital" devoted to expanding education in the Middle East over the last decade. It notes that "out-of-school rates for primary school children have plummeted, often by as much as half." "But in recent years, progress has stalled," it says, with 4.3 million primary-aged children and 2.9 million lower secondary-aged children out of school. An additional 5.1 million children are not getting a year of pre-primary school education, bringing the total number of the region's children out of school to 12.3 million, the report says. That figure represents around 15% of the children in the Middle East who should be receiving pre-primary, primary or

secondary education. The report says a study of nine countries in the region revealed a range of reasons that kept children out of school, including poverty. In many cases, families could not afford costs associated with schooling, including books and uniforms, or the loss of income from a child who could be put to work. "In countries where a substantial group of children remain out of school, they are predominantly from the poorest households in rural areas," the report says. Gender discrimination also remains a factor. "Girls are undervalued, and since they are not expected to work, their families see no need for them to learn," the report says, adding that early marriage is also an issue in most countries in the region. Elsewhere, violence is a problem — either inside schools, or in conflict zones like Syria and Iraq, where millions of children no longer have access to education and schools have been caught up in violence. The report says keeping children in school once they enrolled was a key problem, with high drop-out rates at most levels in many countries in the region. It proposes three main recommendations, including a focus on early childhood development (ECD), noting that pre-primary education is an area where the disparity between wealthy and poor children is most stark in the region. "Levelling the playing field in terms of equal access to ECD is a matter of urgency," it said. It also urges a cross-sector approach to helping children enter school, pointing out that factors from transportation to health can affect whether a child is enrolled or not. Finally, it suggests a focus on "retention," ensuring that children are not pushed out of education once they enrol because of factors like corporal punishment or falling behind peers. It also notes that special attention must be paid to the situation of children caught up in war, "given the recurring character of conflicts" in the region. "The international community should ensure sufficient funding for education in emergencies and national governments in the region should adopt flexible approaches for accommodating the education needs of conflict-affected children." (Times of India 15/4/15)

#### **'Country has failed to protect children from sexual abuse' (14)**

Nagpur: Over the last decade, the number of child rape cases has increased by a whopping 336%, says data recorded by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). The bureau's report for 2013 states that between 2012 and 2013, crimes against children like kidnapping, procuring minor girls and rape have doubled. The average age of sexual abuse victims in the country has been estimated to be around nine years. Despite the serious figures, there is no focus or national discussions on the subject. As a signatory of United Nations convention of Child Rights and a partner in the United Nations declaration on the Rights of the Child, 1959, India guarantees certain rights to its children. These include the rights to protection from abuse, exploitation and neglect among others. However, activists feel that the country has failed miserably in providing the promised rights to its children, who account for 40% of its population. "I believe that children's rights are often disregarded in favour of women's rights. The Women and Child Development ministry focuses on women only, forgetting that they are responsible to the children as well. The political leaders also chose not to intervene as children are not a part of their vote bank," said NGO Child Rights Initiative for Shared Parenting (CRISP). The organization is among the many that have together initiated a discussion on the subject in observance of the national child abuse awareness month. "As per the results of a survey conducted by the Women and Child Development ministry in 2007, more than 50% children in the country face physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect of girl child and several such issues," said writer Yogesh Master, who is also a supporter of the initiative. He believes that despite the figures, there is widespread denial about the existence of child abuse in our society because no one wants to believe that anyone would do something that terrible to a child. Besides, in India, the perpetrators in many cases of child abuse are mostly people known to the children, pointed out child rights activist Sudha Rajashekar. "This means that the child abuse cases are highly underreported. As children are not aware of what inappropriate behaviour means, they don't even know that they are being abused. Since talking about sex is taboo in our society, the victims end up feeling guilty and don't even tell anybody about their plight in many cases," she said. The activists want that children should be given

sex education and a mechanism should be created for them to feel safe to report such cases. (Times of India 17/4/15)

#### **Child rights activists call for sex education in schools (14)**

NEW DELHI: Sex education should be compulsory in all high schools in the country with the focus on explaining what constitutes child abuse, child rights activists said on Sunday. They demanded the setting up of a countrywide child helpline to report cases of abuse, and to train schoolchildren how to use it without revealing the name or identity of the victim and their family. The demand comes in the wake of the Supreme Court's April 17 castigation of the central government for being insensitive towards the protection of child rights and for its reluctance to take effective steps to recover missing children. Blaming the ministry of women and child development for its "casual and insensitive" approach, the social justice bench of the apex court comprising Justice Madan B. Lokur and Justice Uday Umesh Lalit observed that "This is clear indication of the lack of sensitivity on the part of the government and the ministry towards the missing children and its utter disregard for the laws framed by the parliament." It also asked the Centre to take steps for the expeditious appointment of the chairman and the members of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, which posts are lying vacant for quite some time now. Bangalore-based child rights activist Kumar V. Jahgirdar told IANS that there is a need for stricter implementation of the existing laws. "There is need for strict implementation of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012 by creating awareness at the grassroots," said Jahgirdar, who is the president of the Child Rights Initiative for Shared Parenting (CRISP) that is fighting for shared parenting in case of divorce. He said there is also need to promote shared parenting as divorce and separation cases, especially in metros and cities, are on the rise. "There is also need for declaring parental alienation as a crime in the interest of children. In most of the separation cases, the fathers have been denied enough access by their estranged wives to their children. A child needs love and affection from both father and mother," Jahgirdar said. Quoting the Women and Child Development Ministry figures on child abuse cases, he said those in the age group of 5-12 years have reported higher levels of abuse. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act defines a child as anyone below the age of 18 years and protects them from physical offences. It provides for punishment ranging from simple to rigorous imprisonment. Swarup Sarkar, founder of the Delhi chapter of NGO Save Family Foundation, said the schools -- both private and government -- should be made accountable for child safety. He demanded a separate union ministry for child development as they constitute more than 40 percent of the population. (Times of India 19/4/15)

#### **65 child labourers rescued from Mumbai, sent back home (14)**

Mumbai: In an attempt to curb child labour, the Maharashtra government, along with a non-governmental organisation, helped reunite 65 rescued children with their families. The children were rescued from various establishments last month and sent to shelter homes in a joint operation of the NGO and the state government. "I came here to work... I came here on my own... (was working) in Dharavi... from 10 am to 10 pm," said a rescued child, Satish Kumar, adding, "I am feeling happy to go back home." Of the 65, parents of 10 rescued children, picked up their wards from the shelter homes, while the rest were sent to their homes on a special coach of Rajendra Nagar Superfast Express. "Initially we used to rescue around 500 children yearly but now it has come down because these children are sent back to parents who now know that child labour is a crime," said state Minister For Women and Child Development, Vidya Thakur. (Zee News 21/4/15)

#### **490 Children in Kovai, Tirupur to be Re-admitted to Schools (14)**

COIMBATORE: More than 490 out-of-school children, dropouts and child workers from Coimbatore and Tirupur districts will be admitted to government schools and training centres this year. They were identified through a survey conducted by Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan officials, along with school teachers, teachers of special schools, teacher trainees and Anganwadi workers. The survey, which began on April

1, is being carried out in all 15 blocks in Coimbatore district and all seven in Tirupur. It will conclude on April 30, but if necessary, will be extended to May 15, said Additional Chief Educational Officer (SSA) V Maliga. The child workers were working in brick kilns, textile units, farms, restaurants and houses. They will be admitted to training centres under the National Child Labour Project. There are 21 such centres in Coimbatore and Tirupur. Apart from free uniforms and study materials, the child workers will be given a stipend of `150. They will be educated in these centres for three years and then integrated with the mainstream schools. (New Indian Express 23/4/15)

#### **Over 1,200 children to be trained on rights (14)**

VIJAYAWADA: In its move to prevent atrocities against children, the district administration is creating awareness among children and women on child laws and rights. The District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) of the Women Development and Child Welfare (WD&CW) Department is imparting training to children on child rights, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012, Juvenile Welfare Department, Juvenile Justice Board and Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2006. "The government has constituted Village Level Child Protection Committees, to which students will be admitted. More than 570 committees have been formed," said WD&CW Krishna District Project Director (PD) K. Krishna Kumar. "The situation is alarming in Krishna district. In some cases, girls aged below 10 years are subjected to sexual abuse and assault. More than 30 child marriages were prevented in the last few months. We are trying to increase literacy rate among girls to prevent atrocities, child marriages and violence against them," the PD said. "Out of two students, one should be female. The Village Level Child Protection Committees will take decision on filing complaint with the police and recommending for protection and shelter to the victim," DCPU Officer Ch. Vijay Kumar said. The government paid Rs. 15 lakh financial assistance to victims under the POCSO Act during 2014-15, which was Rs. 40,000 during 2013-14, he added. (The Hindu 24/4/15)

#### **50 per cent of 'rescued' minors return to work (14)**

Mumbai: NGO Pratham, which has been working since 2014 on tracking children rescued from child labour in Mumbai, claimed that about 70 per cent of children who were unofficially sent back home to UP and Bihar, could not be traced. The NGO also claimed that it was unable to trace nearly 20 per cent of the children who were sent back through government channels. Superintendent of Dongri correction home, Shankar Jadhav said, "Taking help of NGOs to do our work is essential. Pratham has been tracking children rescued from child labour for the past one year." As per the information provided by Pratham, a task force comprising the Mumbai police, labour department and the NGO rescued about 366 children between April 2013 and March 2014. Another 2,650 children were rescued unofficially through preventive action. The task force had successfully rescued 732 more such child labourers between April 2014 and March 2015 while the NGO has saved 995 more children by taking preventive action. By means of explaining what preventive action actually involves, Navnath Kamble from Pratham said, "As part of preventive action, we meet people who employ minors and inform them that it is illegal to make minors work as labourers and ask them to send the children back home. In such incidents, crime cases are not registered against the employers but we keep a record of the children." Director of the Pratham Council for Vulnerable Children, Kishore Bhamre who has been working with the NGO for the past 12 years said, "We have started tracking children who were to return to UP and Bihar. Slowly, we will start tracking children in other states as well." He further added, "Last year, we went through records of children rescued from child labour in Mumbai in the past four years. We short-listed the children whose addresses were mentioned clearly. As per the NGO's records, they had information on 463 children belonging to Bihar but on visiting their homes, the official found only 232 of the children while the rest had allegedly left their homes and ventured out for work again. Similarly, in UP after the NGO officials visited the homes of the minors, of the total 76 children, 20 children were found while 56 had left their villages. All these children were rescued by the task force in Mumbai. "Some of the parents confessed that their children

had gone back to work but the parents who knew they could be prosecuted for being involved in child labour lied that their children were at their relative's place. About 70 per cent of the children sent unofficially to both Bihar and UP could not be traced," said Mr Bhamre. To ensure there is no confusion over tracking the rescued children, the superintendent of Dongri correction home said that they have started an inter-state co-ordination programme. "The inter-state coordination is active in Bihar. The Patna CWC will keep a track of the children who have recently been rescued by us. The programme is underway in Uttar Pradesh and soon we will co-ordinate with West Bengal, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Chattisgarh as well." (Asian Age 26/4/15)

### **Child labour bitter truths (14)**

Ranchi, April 29: Jharkhand is gearing up to observe National Child Labour Day tomorrow, but the truth is that despite taking a series of initiatives and measures the state has failed to curb the social malaise. According to the 2001 census, there are around 4 lakh child labourers in Jharkhand. Over the years, the state labour department conducted a series of raids at shops, dhabas, hotels, mines and stone-crushing units to rescue minor workers. It also implemented pre-rescue, post-rescue and rehabilitation schemes like running National Child Labour Project (NCLP) special schools, bridge schools, linking the rescued to vocational training centres, opening short-stay homes and starting a child tracking system. But truth be told, a few of these initiatives could be sustained for long. As state convener of Bachpan Bachao Andolan Sanjay Mishra points out, rehabilitation of the rescued children had not been complete. "Though NCLP schools have been opened, little effort has been taken to run them successfully. Even Rs 100 as stipend and supplementary nutrition have been stopped," Mishra said. For example, in Pakur district, where the percentage of child labour is the highest (6.9 per cent) as per the Annual Health Survey (AHS) report of 2012-2013, the state labour department started 19 NCLP schools in 2010. "But today, only four NCLP schools are operational. The rest have been shut due to lack of funds. Besides, the dropout rate in Classes I and II is 40 per cent while from Classes I to V is 70 per cent," said director of the state labour department Jeet Wahan Oraon. (The Telegraph 30/4/15)

### **34 child labourers rescued (14)**

BENGALURU: Thirty-four children, including 19 girls, employed in an agro industry at Kannahalli, near Sheegehalli Cross, were rescued by the anti-human trafficking unit of the Criminal Investigation Department on Thursday. Of them three are under the age of 14. The police arrested the contractor and HR Manager of the company. "We had information that many minors were being forced to work in Ballad Agro Industries, which makes herbal products. The industry was raided on Thursday. There were around 200 employees in the industry and 34 of them were minors," a CID source said. "Jirad, the contractor who was bringing the child labourers, and Gopalakrishna Kamat, HR Manager, were arrested," the source said. A case has been registered in Tavarekere police station under the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act and Child Labour laws. (The Hindu 1/5/15)

### **Activists write to Modi on plan to dilute child labour law (14)**

BENGALURU: The Centre's proposal to amend the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, is not something Bengaluru's activists agree with. The amendment will allow children between 14 years and 18 years to work in non-hazardous, select family enterprises without letting it affect their education. In an email to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other MPs, activists have demanded that the Centre revisit the proposal that will exempt certain family enterprises like farming from being labelled child labour. "All forms of child labour must be prohibited (up to 18 years) and it must be ensured that children get a good education," said the appeal which was prepared through a resolution passed at an emergency meeting convened at the Centre for Child and Law (CCL) in National Law School of India University on April 23. Arguing that the proposal to divide children into two categories—children (0-14) and adolescents (14-18)

based on the recommendations of the National Advisory Council is unacceptable, CCL said: "It is ridiculous from the point of progressive realization of child rights." The Parliamentary Standing Committee has also asked the government to review its proposal regarding the definition of a child. While the Act aims to abolish child labour, a sub-section of the proposed Bill provides immunity to family businesses that are not hazardous. CCL said the standing committee had asked the labour ministry to review the meaning of hazardous processes and widen the definition to include all those processes that may jeopardize health, safety and morals of adolescents, which the ministry paid no heed to. Stating that exempting certain occupations from child labour laws is a violation of the Right to Education Act Nirranjan Aradhya VP, fellow, CCL, said: "If we propose another law that takes away this right to education, how will children attend school? Any activity that prevents a child from attending school is child labour and must be abolished." Samuel Sathyaseelan from CCL said that even if the work is after school hours, it will obstruct a child's right to rest and indulge in recreation, which may eventually result in the child discontinuing from school. Komal Ganotra of Child Rights and You said, "Agriculture-based work, for instance, requires seven to eight hours a day. In some cases, children have to wake up at 3am to pluck jasmine flowers. The work is done by 6.30am and then they leave to school. This will affect their performance in school." (Times of India 4/5/15)

#### **Poor urban children more likely to die than the rich kids (14)**

Children of the urban poor in Delhi are 3.2 times more likely to die than their richer counterparts, a report released here on Tuesday said. The global under-five mortality rate has come down down by half from 90 to 46 deaths per 1,000 live births between 1990 and 2013 and the success story includes India. India, in the same period, has achieved a decline of 54.4 percent as against the global progress of 44.8 percent, the report "The Urban Disadvantage", prepared by NGO Save the Children and released by Union Minister Najma Heptullah, said. The report which analysed urban child survival gap between the rich and the poor urban kids in 36 developing countries shows that in the age group 0-5 years, the urban poor are 3.2 times more likely to die compared with the urban rich in Delhi. The report's findings state that the quality of life of mothers and children in the urban slums of India's capital city is one of the worst in the world and the health inequity between the rich and the poor is stark. Heptullah said: "We used to feel that more children are not being taken care of in rural areas. But this report proves otherwise." She said that the health of urban children was an important issue as by 2030 a significant amount of population will be moving to cities. People living in slums and congested areas face a lot of health issues due to poor sanitation and congestion, she added. The 10 countries showing the greatest survival divide between wealthy and poor urban children are: Rwanda, Cambodia, Kenya, Vietnam, Peru, India, Madagascar, Ghana, Bangladesh and Nigeria. Sudeep Gadok, director of programs of Save the Children, said: "The government of India has made great progress in ensuring the survival of newborns, infants and mothers." "For the first time in history, more than half of the world's population lives in urban areas. People are often drawn to cities by the prospect of a better life for their children, but many cities around the world are unable to keep up with breakneck growth." "... leaving hundreds of millions of mothers and children in cities without access to essential health services and the clean water they need to survive and stay healthy," he said. The report asserts that there is an urgent need to close the gap in life chances for mothers and children so that - no matter where they live - everyone has a fair chance to survive and fulfil their potential. (Times of India 6/5/15)

#### **NGO rescues 10 child labourers near labor dept building (14)**

LUDHIANA: Members of Navchetna, an NGO working for child labour in the city, on Monday start their awareness campaign against child labour in city. However, they were in for a shock when they spotted 10 child labourers near the labor department building on Gill road. Sukhdir Sekhon, Navchetna president, said, "As many as 10 child labourers were spotted near the labor department building and nearby areas. We had gone there to start our awareness campaign. Three children were working at a scrap shop in the

building, one was working at the backside of the building in a car washing garage, three were selling tobacco in shops near the labour department building and one child was working at a shop." He added, "Charity should begin at home. The labor department, besides raiding different places in the city, should also look in their backyard. All the children rescued near the department building were working on the daily wage of Rs 50-100 per day and were between 6 and 14 years of age. The NGO members also met with the parents of these children and urged them to send their wards to government schools in the nearby areas localities. They also gifted them books and pencils. "We also met the shopkeepers who had employed these children and told them that it was wrong and illegal to employ children. Instead when any child comes to ask for employment, they should motivate them to study and go to school," Sukhdir added. Ludhiana coordinator, labor-cum-conciliation officer, Mona Puri said, "We continuously conduct raids in the city. The NGO members should have informed us if they were going to do some campaign. If they had spotted or rescued any children, they should have come to us and got them registered at schools under the National Child labor Project. We are working in accordance with the Bachpan Bachao Andolan as directed by the court." (Times of India 12/5/15)

#### **State child rights panel serves notice on DTO (14)**

LUDHIANA: For making students of Sacred Heart Senior Secondary School, BRS Nagar, wait under the hot sun on May 4 when as many as 24 school vehicles were challaned, out of which 13 were impounded the district transport officer (DTO) Anil Garg has been served a notice by the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) Punjab. In the notice, the commission has asked the DTO to give an explanation for making students suffer when their school vehicles were being challaned/impounded. Apart from this, the commission has also asked the DTO to give suggestions and precautions which could be taken while school vehicles are being challaned/impounded, so that students are not made to suffer in the process. Reportedly, while the DTO was checking and challaning school vehicles, students were unloaded, and they had to stand outside the school until the formalities were completed. Talking to ToI, SCPCR Punjab chairperson Sukesh Kalia said: "Through the news, I became aware that while the DTO was challaning school vehicles of Sacred Heart Senior Secondary School, BRS Nagar, students had to wait outside the school in extreme hot weather. The DTO might be performing his duty, but any act which causes inconvenience to children should not be accepted. So, I have served a notice to him to give an explanation. Alongside, I have also asked him for some suggestions to make challaning drivers hassle-free for school children." Kalia added that it was not necessary to impound a school vehicle on the spot. A guard or constable may escort the school vehicle until the last kid is dropped home, and then the DTO can impound the vehicle. Another option is that the DTO may keep all the documents of the driver, with directions to report at his office after dropping the children home. Garg responded: "According to the Motor Vehicle Act, only a moving vehicle can be challaned, so I have to challan a school vehicle when it is loaded. If parents or schools pro-actively follow their responsibility and examine vehicles, it will help avoid such incidents. Importantly, the high court has asked schools to designate a traffic manager who can examine all the vehicles being used to ferry school students. However, most of the schools have not let their owned vehicles or private vehicles be examined, as revealed under an RTI (A copy with ToI). Moreover, that day, the guard went along with the buses, and only when the last child was dropped, then the drivers, accompanied by the guards, came back and thereafter, their vehicles were impounded." (Times of India 13/5/15)

#### **Employing Adolescents in Any Industry Not Correct: Activists (14)**

CHENNAI: Compulsory education, generation next, and progress. While these buzzwords are seen as representing the 'future', allowing children in the age group of 14 to 18 to work by categorising them as adolescents has irked child rights activists. The National Policy for the Child, which India ratified in 2013, classifies anyone under the age of 18 as a child. But the changes proposed to the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2012, exempts them from child labour - a glaring contradiction

according to activists. "These are double standards, where we are claiming to agree with the policy to the outside world, but are buckling under market pressure and allowing children in this age to work," says V Geetha, advocate, Madras High Court. The age of 14 is considered vulnerable and one where it is most easy to abandon education and follow a downhill path to ill habits and delinquency, believe activists. "If children suddenly get money at this age without adult supervision, the independence might get to their heads. We saw in the Nirbhaya case that one of the accused was a dropout and labourer. We blame them but do not want to protect them," says Thomas Jayaraj, director, Centre for Child Rights and Development. The age of 16 could be a better option for children to get employment, where they have at least the minimum education qualification, believes Andal Damodaran, president, Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW), TN. The clause has allowed for adolescent labour to be exempt from 'hazardous industries' - 18 occupations and 65 processes. "I know children who roll 1,500 beedis a day with their mothers, and then go to school. Many of them have dropped out. How will this Act help them?" wonders Girija Kumar Babu, joint secretary, ICCW. Some others argue that employment of any form at this age is detrimental to the growth of the child. "If a 15-year-old is wiping a table for 12 hours a day, wouldn't you call that hazardous to him or her? This would never be acceptable to a middle class child, why is it alright for them?" asks Ossie Fernandes, director, Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation. (New Indian Express 16/5/15)

#### **Proposed amendments to Child Labour Act slammed (14)**

VELLORE: The amendments proposed to be introduced in the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986, for which the Union Cabinet has accorded its approval recently, has been widely criticised by social activists. The Vellore Institute of Development Studies (VIDS) has stated that the amendments to impose stricter punishment on those employing children below 14 years, but allowing minors to work in non-hazardous family enterprises and the audio-visual entertainment industry are "ill-conceived and ill-advised". It is also contrary to the central government's declared policy of total elimination of the bonded child labour system. These amendments will only tend to perpetuate the child labour system in the society, said P. Jegadish Gandhi, Director of VIDS. Dr. Gandhi said that the bonded labour system should not be allowed in any form or sectoral activities. The VIDS, he said, strongly advocates the total abolition of child labour by 2020 in India by adopting the hitherto best practices of pro-active NGOs. "Against this scenario, by allowing the presence of child labour in many shades of family enterprises will facilitate child exploitation within walls under the cloak of learning family skills", he said. Era. Chandrasekharan, president of Udhavum Ullangal, a Vellore-based NGO said that the amendments will create loopholes. This will embolden employers of child labour to perpetuate child labour under the garb of legal protection. He pointed out that only in the last few years, the government has created a semblance of awareness among the employers. It has also thrown light on the need to eliminate child labour through its stringent measures against employment of children in work, He was of the view that the proposed amendments will only help the traditional employers of child labour to engage children in work and escape from the clutches of law. The amendments, Mr. Chandrasekharan said, will tend to reverse the good work done in the area of rescuing child workers and enrolling them in schools, and lead to a situation where school-going children are taken out of schools and engaged in labour. Thanks to the measures taken by the district administration through the Child Labour Abolition Support Scheme (CLASS) in Vellore district, there was considerable reduction of child labour in the hotel industry. The amendments will reverse the trend. The amendments are not in the interests of children who are supposed to enjoy the pleasures of childhood and the benefits of education, he said. Ruby Nakka, founder of The Hope House, a home for special children in Gandhinagar, Vellore and a former president of the District Child Welfare Committee said that the proposed amendments would provide ample scope for abuse of the exemptions given to the engagement of child labour. While it is good to encourage the talent among child artistes in the entertainment industry, paying the children for their performance would constitute child labour, he said. (The Hindu 17/5/15)

### **Debt-ridden farmers 'sell' their children in MP (14)**

MOHANPURA: Lal Singh was desperate. The farmer from Mohanpura village in Madhya Pradesh had seen unseasonably heavy rains and hailstorms destroy crop after crop, while he fell deeper into debt. Finally, last August, with no way to feed his family, Singh felt he had only one choice: He sold his two sons to a shepherd for a year of labour, in exchange for Rs 35,000. "I was in no position to repay the debt and needed more money to make ends meet and plant a further crop," Singh said in an interview in Mohanpura. He made the decision, he said, despite knowing "it was illegal and they could be abused and forced to work in cruel conditions." Worsening crop failures, brought on by extreme weather, are leading to increasing financial desperation in Madhya Pradesh - and a rash of suicides and child trafficking, officials say. According to Rajnish Shrivastava, the district collector of Harda district, authorities rescued five children from forced labour in April, all from Khargone and Harda districts. Officials believe there could be many other cases of farmers trading their children for money, he said. "It is a matter of concern that farmers have been forced to sell their kids to repay their debts," he said. "We can't allow children to be abused and trafficked in this way." Eight months after being sold into labour, Singh's children were among the five rescued, Shrivastava said. Sumit, 12, and Amit, 11, fled from the shepherd and were taken to a local shelter, according to officials. Initially reluctant to return to their family for fear of how their parents would react, the boys are now back home, officials said. "Our job was to look after the sheep and other animals," Amit told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "(The shepherd) thrashed us over trivial issues. We were not given even two meals a day. As things became intolerable we took courage and fled." Authorities have ordered an investigation, while the shepherds who allegedly bought the five rescued children have been charged with the unlawful confinement of children and are awaiting trial, Shrivastava said. According to Vishnu Jaiswal, director of the Harda branch of children's charity Childline, officials from his charity and from the government will visit the rescued children's families from time to time to ensure they are being well looked after. "Trading our children was wrong but we were forced to do this just to stay alive," Sumit and Amit's mother, Manibai, said in an interview. "Otherwise, like many other farmers, we too would have been forced to commit suicide.".. (Times of India 21/5/15)

### **Helped mom sell onions, it wasn't child labour: Bandaru Dattatreya (14)**

NEW DELHI: Labour Minister Bandaru Dattatreya stoutly defends the proposed amendments to the law allowing children below 14 years to work in family-owned enterprises, arguing that the existing law is impractical and often results in harassment. Just in case you are not convinced by his arguments, he shares his personal experience. When he was 10- or 11-years-old, the soft-spoken BJP veteran from Telangana, would go down to the Osmangunj market in Hyderabad in the evenings to assist his mother, Eswaramma, who used to sell onions. "Like other street vendors she would put up an umbrella and sell onions sitting under it. In the evenings, after school, I went to assist her. I would pack the leftover onions in bags and carry it back home, while she settled the accounts. My mother could not employ anyone to carry the bag because she could not afford paying wages to anyone else. Her income was Rs 15 and to pay Rs 5 would have been tough," Dattatreya told TOI in an interview, while defending the move that has faced criticism from several child rights activists. The union cabinet recently cleared amendments to the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, and proposed to allow employment of children below 14 years in family enterprises with the rider that work should not interfere with their education. The minister said that several safeguards have been built, including a provision that is meant to ensure that children assist their parents after school hours and during vacations. Further, a rehabilitation fund is also proposed for those employing child labour, which will result in employers having to shell out Rs 50,000 that will be used for education and skill development with another Rs 15,000 coming from the state government. "When it comes to family-owned enterprises, seeing the economic and social conditions in our country, we need to be practical. We have proposed a very clear definition of family to include parents, siblings, maternal uncle etc. It is not a question of labour at all, you are assisting the family and

there is no question of wages or salary," Dattatreya said. Isn't the definition of family a little open-ended? The minister again goes back to his own experience to justify the proposal. Dattatreya's maternal uncle would often seek his help in getting rice to his shop or would ask him to man the shop for a while. "This is not child labour. These are Indian traditions, which are very different," the minister insisted. (Times of India 23/5/15)

#### **7 months on, child rights panel exists only on paper (14)**

NEW DELHI: For over seven months now, work has come to a grinding halt at the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights. The statutory agency, tasked with monitoring violations of child rights, does not have either a chairperson or any of the six members since October 2014. While new cases have reduced to a trickle because of the lack of members, the Commission continues to have a backlog. It has 1391 cases of violations of the Right to Education Act as on December 2014, while cases of child rights violations and abuse are 2216. Former Commission member Dr Vandana Prasad said, " This is a loss of space in a statutory institution that has power and visibility and can act in a very non-partisan way on the issue of child rights. There are so many decisions being taken by the government which are inimical to the interests of the child and we as activists are feeling that loss. We have nowhere to raise these issues or debate them?" Prasad was referring to recent decisions like amendments to the Juvenile Justice act and the Child Labour Act which have been opposed by the activists. While JJ Act provides for children between 16-18 years of age accused of heinous crimes like gang-rape or murder to be tried as adults, the new amendments to the Child Labour Act encourages businesses to use child labour with impunity, activists say. Child rights activist Raj Mangal Prasad said, "There is no forum for grievance redress and monitoring of POCSO (Protection of Children Against Sexual Offences) and RTE at the national level are completely missing." Activists have also pointed out that political appointments with little or no knowledge in the field of child rights have been made earlier and subverted the institution. "If the Commission is headed by a political appointee, isn't it much better it is left vacant? The person may do more harm than good," a rights activist said. The government, however, seems to be in no urgency despite a Supreme Court order in February this year asking it to expedite appointments. According to a RTI response, the women and child development (WCD) ministry invited applications after the term of chairperson Kushal Singh expired in October 2014. About 1364 people applied for the post of member while 169 applied for the position of the chairperson. Sources said the ministry had at least twice sent a list of shortlisted candidates which was rejected by the PMO. (Times of India 26/5/15)

#### **Campaign to provide free education for economically underprivileged children (14)**

MANGALURU: Seven-year-old Shailesh and his six-year-old brother Srinidhi from Pachchanady, studying in a Government School visited the Deputy Commissioner's office with their mother Pushpa, after assurance by activists of Child Rights Activists and Parents Association of free education for Pushpa's children in a private school in the locality. "We do not have any problem in going to the present school. We have been assured of a seat in private school. Hence we are here," said Pushpa, who stays in a thatched roof house in Panchchanady. Her elder son Shailesh will be studying in the third standard this year while her younger son Srinidhi will be in the first standard. These two children were among the 15 odd students brought by the Child Rights Activists and Parents Association to the office of the Deputy Commissioner. Dinesh Hegde Ulepady, the President of the Association, said these students should be admitted to private schools that has all facilities as prescribed under the Right to Education Act. "There is lack of awareness of the Act and hence they have not filed applications (seeking admission)," said Mr. Ulepady, who wanted the Government to ensure admission of these children. The children belonging to underprivileged category are entitled for free education in private schools, who have earmarked 25 per cent seats for LKG and first standard. The process of admission has started with as many as 95,139 students getting admission in the two rounds of allocation process held till May 5 through out the state. (The Hindu 29/5/15)

#### **785 Held Last Year for Child Labour: RTI Reply (14)**

NEW DELHI: As many as 785 were convicted last year under the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act 1986 for the employment of children below the age of 14 years, reveals an RTI reply. The Ministry of Labour & Employment, which collected the data from states regarding the violation and conviction said that 1098 violations came to notice and 1054 prosecutions were launched against the violators. "Any person who employs a child in any occupation or process where employment of children is prohibited under the Child Labour Act, is liable for punishment with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than three months, but which may extend to a year, a fine which shall not be less than `10, 000 but which may extend to `20,000 or with both," the Ministry said in its RTI response. The Ministry also said that 5167 Special Training Centres under National Child Labour Project (NCLP) districts were operational till December 2014. The Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act prohibits employment of a child in 18 occupations and 65 processes and regulates the conditions of working of children in other occupations. Recently on May 13, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave its approval for moving official amendments to the Amendment Bill, 2012 allowing children below age 14 to work in non-hazardous family enterprises after school hours or during vacations. The Act also allows for employing children as artists in the entertainment industry, including advertisement, films, television serials or any such other entertainment or sports activities except the circus. (New Indian Express 1/6/15)

#### **'Child sex abuse cases on the rise in Tamil Nadu' (14)**

MADURAI: A 14-year-old dalit girl from a village near Kodaikanal in Dindigul district was abused by two non-dalit men on May 7, and she is one among the increasing number of child sex abuse victims in the state, Evidence the NGO said. The Class 9 student from Alapatti village in Kodaikanal had gone out of her house on May 7 at about 8.30pm to go to the toilet. Two men, Siva alias Sokkanathan, 26, and Suresh, 37, who had gone there allegedly abducted her in a car and took her into a forest in the region and raped her. They dropped her near her house on the morning of May 8. A case was registered by the Kodaikanal all-women police station on May 9. The two men were arrested under Section 3(2)(5) of the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989. According to Evidence, 677 sexual abuse cases were registered in the year 2011, which went up to 1,124 in 2014. This shows a 60% rise in the number of sexual abuse cases in Tamil Nadu in the last three years. In 60% of these cases, children are the victims, the NGO said. Also, the accused in these crimes are never subjected to any medical examination. It is mostly the victims who are subjected to a namesake examination. Children who are victims of sexual abuse become psychologically disturbed and they are never given proper counseling or medical treatment. Hence, the Tamil Nadu government should ensure that this victim is adequately compensated with proper counseling. The government should also bear the expense of her education, apart from giving the family a compensation of Rs ten lakh, the NGO said. (Times of India 5/6/15)

#### **48 pc Rise in Child Abuse Cases in TS and AP, Says Child Rights Panel (14)**

HYDERABAD: Child abuse cases in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh are on alarming rise with 48 percent increase every year. At the same time, the crime rate by juveniles has also went up in the recent years, according to the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights for AP and TS. Despite these facts, this constitutional body hardly receives any complaints from victims or their parents. The commission found that more than 1,000 cases of both sexual, physical assault against children and other violations of child rights from both the states every month. But majority of them are going unnoticed. Blame it on lack of awareness or the absence of strict Acts, more than 90 percent of such cases are not being reported either to the commission or to the police. Currently there are around 100 child abuse complaints pending with the commission, out of which more than half of them are taken as suo moto cases. Sexual violence cases against minors in both AP and Telangana are one of the highest in the country, according to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). But only three such cases are reported to the commission every month. Achyuta Rao, a member of the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, AP and TS, said

several of these cases are being settled by the police. To bring them into the light, the commission started taking suo moto cases based on news reports, he said. The commission has also expressed concern over rapidly increasing number of child labourers in Hyderabad. Recent rescue operations by the city police may have freed more than 500 children from factories, but there are thousands of children still stuck in domestic labour. A recent study by the commission discovered that even after the raids, highest number of child labourers are still working as house maids in apartments, especially in gated communities. Rao said often the commission's attempts to rescue child labourers from apartments and gated communities face hurdles from politicians and influential businessmen who support the child labour mafia. (New Indian Express 8/6/15)

#### **Over 50 percent rise in child labour in Indian urban areas: CRY (14)**

Kolkata: Child labour in urban India increased by over 50 percent between 2001 and 2011, a report by NGO CRY said on Thursday, highlighting the links to the rise in migration. An analysis of the census data by CRY (Child Rights and You) said child labour in urban areas in the country increased by 53 percent over 2001-2011. The report was released Thursday ahead of the World Day Against Child Labour on Friday. "Working children between 5-9 years increased by 37 percent. Of particular concern is the whopping rise in child labour in the age group of 5-9 years in urban areas - the number of working boys grew by 154 percent whereas the number of working girls grew by 240 percent," the analysis said. Five Indian states - Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra - harbour the majority of working children. These states account for more than 55 lakh child workers. The observations of the heightened numbers in urban spaces is of "utmost concern", according to Komal Ganotra, director, Policy and Research, CRY. "This is of utmost concern especially since enforcement machinery is primarily based in urban regions and the implementation of child protection structures is stronger in urban India. "This increase in urban child labour could be attributed to increased migration including seasonal migration for employment as well as trafficking of unaccompanied minors," Ganotra said. (Business Standard 11/6/15)

#### **Every 11th kid in India a part of the labour force: Study (14)**

NAGPUR: More than 120 million children between ages 5 and 14 across the world are involved in child labour, according to some estimates. Of them, 10.13 million are in India. Despite the United Nations and the constitutions of several countries constituting laws against it, child labour is prevalent all through the globe even today. The situation in India is so bad that every eleventh child in the country is part of the labour force. Child labour in the country is mainly concentrated in five states including Maharashtra. In the state, 5-6% of the working population consists of children. This information was released by NGO Child Rights and You (CRY) on the occasion of World Day against Child Labour on Friday, based on the analysis of 2011 census figures. A study to determine the attitude of young India on the issue was also released on the occasion. Friday was World Day against Child Labour. "Our Constitution guarantees the rights for children against child labour and gives them the right to education to children up to the age of 14. Yet, today we stand as a nation that has been incapable of making any significant progress when it comes to child labour and the ever-increasing numbers prove this. Isn't it time for a conversation around the incontestable rights of a child to a safe, secure and healthy childhood; free from abuse, labour and other discriminatory practices?," said Kreeanne Rabadi, regional director of CRY (West). This persistence of child labour is rooted in poverty, lack of decent work for adults, lack of social protection and a failure to ensure that all children are attending school through to the legal minimum age, she added. With insufficient education and skills, child labourers often grow up to get poorly paid jobs or be unemployed, forcing them to push their own children into the workforce. "The government has made several good laws but their implementation is lacking. Citizens can help in this by being our informants and sources. However, most of the times when a person calls us to complaint, they are not ready to get involved by accompanying us to the place or staying at the place they are complaining about. When we

go there later, the children are nowhere to be found," said Vasanti Deshpande, executive director of city-based NGO Vardaan that is also a part of government's Childline project. What is most important is to work towards preventing the causes like poverty, widespread unemployment and not understanding the importance of education among the economically backward classes, she added. Rehabilitation of these labourers can be done through vocational training, she said. "Mostly, as a society, we need to be more sensitive towards the needs of our children," said Deshpande.... (Times of India 14/6/15)

#### **Total prohibition of child labour stressed (14)**

MADURAI: The government should totally prohibit child labour and stop all attempts to regulate it, the Tamil Nadu Domestic Workers' Union said here on Saturday. Addressing a press conference, P. Clara, its State coordinator, said that the move to include a provision in Section 3 of Child Labour Act 1986 to allow children below 14 years of age to work in home-based business would create a loophole to promote child labour. It would open the door to exploitation of children and also create cheap labour. She pointed out that sustained efforts by various organisations over the years had resulted in an increase in the number of children going to school. But relaxing the existing law to allow children to work after school hours would increase the number of child workers, harm their health and deprive them of their right to recreation. Child labour could be eradicated by sending all children to school and providing adequate jobs for their parents. She said that the differentiation of work as hazardous and non-hazardous was meaningless as any work was hazardous to a child. While the government should empower and sufficiently fund local bodies to deal with child labour it should withdraw the move to amend the Child Labour Act as it would go against the spirit of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child. All children below 18 years of age should be brought under the ambit of right to education, Ms. Clara said. (The Hindu 15/6/15)

#### **'Gift of education' for poor children (14)**

Virudhunagar: Scholarships and learning materials to pursue education were handed over to poor children and former child workers at a function organised by Udhavum Ullangal, a Chennai-based service organisation, at Kalaimagal Higher Secondary School, Tiruthangal, on Sunday. The 'gift of education' was presented to former child workers recovered by the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) by C. Ramasubramanian, State Nodal Officer, District Mental Health Programme, and B. Ramachandran, District Educational Officer. T. Narayanasamy, Project Officer, NCLP, addressed the gathering. The children, who received the scholarship, included those who had scored high marks in this year's public examinations. B. Shankar Mahadevan, founder, Udhavum Ullangal, said that the organisation had been providing assistance to children from underprivileged background to pursue education for the last 15 years. In Sivakasi, the focus had been on former child workers. Mentorship sessions were being held in Sivakasi once in two months to guide the children. Sessions at these classes were handled by those pursuing higher education with assistance from Udhavum Ullangal. Mr. Shankar Mahadevan pointed out that two women, who were rescued from child labour by the NCLP, were now working as nurses in Tirunelveli, after qualifying themselves in nursing with Udhavum Ullangal assistance. The award of scholarship could be extended further with assistance from philanthropists of Virudhunagar and Sivakasi, he said. (The Hindu 18/6/15)

#### **Over 8,000 children work in Delhi's garment sector (14)**

NEW DELHI: More than 8,000 children including 70 per cent girls are engaged in child labour in the garment sector in Delhi, a recent study has found out. The study 'Hidden Workforce' conducted by the non-profit organisation, Save the Children, was launched by the Delhi Government's Women and Child Development and Social Welfare Department on Friday. The report found out that a significantly higher number of children were engaged in household-level work with 87 per cent children working in home settings and only 13 per cent worked in Addas (household-based units where unrelated adults and children work together). Due to this, despite the reported reduction in overall child labour over the past

decade, there has been a comparative growth of child labour in the informal sector. Minister for Women and Child Development and Social Welfare, Delhi government, Sandeep Kumar said: "It is perturbing and shameful that children's engagement in informal labour, including in the garment industry — which has also contributed to the rising rate of school drop-outs — continues to be a sad reality in the national Capital." "There is an urgent need to tackle the situation and we can achieve this if the social organisations work in co-ordination with the government. Our government is working on a scheme to eradicate child labour and we aim to achieve it within the next five years," he added. According to the report, child labour in the garment industry is one of the rapidly growing unorganised workforces in cities like Delhi, owing to sub-contracting and outsourcing of work. (The Hindu 21/6/15)

#### **Survey finds child beggars in comfort zone (14)**

CHANDIGARH: With a pick-and-drop service in place, income of Rs 300 (approximately) a day and no burden of studies, child beggars in the city hate the idea of a better life. This is what a survey conducted by students of Panjab University under their internship programme with Chandigarh Commission for Protection of Child rights, has found out. Students were divided into five teams, "Team 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5". They found that in every 10 sectors there were 100 to 150 child beggars. Most of them said they had no parents and lived with relatives. They claimed that they went to school but begged in the evening. With vacations now under way, they resorted to the practice full time, the survey stated, adding that depending on the day, the beggars shifted to different sites. For instance, on first Ramzan, all of them gathered outside mosques. The survey further claimed child beggars had their special pick-and-drop services. "In Industrial Area, we found beggars living in Hallomajra and every morning and evening being dropped and picked. This hints towards a racket," said Ginny Mahajan, one of the team leaders. The students also rescued some beggars who needed urgent help. One of them was a girl missing from Moradabad. "We found her begging in Furniture Market. She said she lived with her aunt. When we cross-questioned the two, we found the answers didn't match. We called the police and the child rights commission. It was then found that she was missing from Moradabad and her father's brother had dumped her in Chandigarh," said Yudhvir Singh, one of the team leaders. One of the teams also called the child helpline and informed about child labourers working in dhabas in sectors 7 and 27. All the students belonged to different departments of PU. (Times of India 23/6/15)

#### **25 children rescued (14)**

NEW DELHI: In a major operation, the Office of South Delhi District Magistrate on Wednesday rescued 25 children from Yusuf Sarai Market and Gautam Nagar area. Officials said the rescue operation led by SDM Hauz Khas was carried out after DM South Niharika Rai received information about the children working in production units and shopping arcades. Officials said various shops and temporary structures were sealed during the raid where children were found to be working in deplorable conditions. "Twenty five children in all have been rescued and have been taken for medical examination. Strict action is being taken against the offenders under Child Labour Act, Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 Juveniles Justice (Core & Protection of Children) Act and Rules there under," Ms Rai said. (The Hindu 25/6/15)

#### **"Child labour increased by 53 per cent in urban India" (14)**

KOLKATA: At a time when Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi has supported the controversial amendment to the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act which allows children under 14 years of age to work in family-run enterprises, a recently-concluded analysis by Child Rights and You (CRY) revealed that there has been a significant increase in working children in the age group of 5-9 years. Compiling data from the 2001 and 2011 census, the report states that in urban areas while the number of working girls rose by 240 per cent, it increased by 154 per cent for working boys. Overall, there has been a 53 per cent increase in child labour in urban India, while there is a drop of about 29 per cent in rural areas. "Society is

largely to blame for the increase in working children in urban areas as most of the children work as domestic helps,” chairperson of the West Bengal State Commission of Protection of Child Rights Ashokendu Sengupta told The Hindu . “This increase in urban child labour could be attributed to increased migration, including seasonal migration for employment as well as trafficking of unaccompanied minors,” director, policy and research, CRY, Komal Ganotra said. (The Hindu 26/6/15)

#### **Child rights panel to probe girl’s rape case (14)**

Ludhiana: Punjab State Commission for Protection of Child Rights will supervise the probe of a 14-year-old girl, who fell in the trap of a child trafficking gang and was later raped by two persons. In the meantime, Division No. 7 police have also registered a case of rape under Section 376 of the IPC against unidentified persons and started the investigation. President of NGO Swami Vivekananda Manch Mohit Sood along with BJP leader Gurdeep Singh today met Punjab State Commission for Protection of Child Rights chairman Sukesh Kalia demanding fair probe in the matter. (The Tribune 28/6/15)

#### **Survey punches holes in govt claims on child labourers (14)**

BHOPAL: Turning state government's claims on its head about miniscule number -- 108 of child labourers, in the state, 2011 census puts count at 7,239 across the state. The damning facts came out in a survey, interns of Madhya Pradesh Human Rights Commission (MPHRC). The findings were shared on Wednesday. Over 152 child labourers, 24 parents and 19 employers were made to fill questionnaire during study. Around 67% of 152 labourers were found in age-group between 12 and 16 years of age. Of them, 22 were into hazardous work. Close to half of child labourers did not have pure water to drink or access to school, according to a press released issued by the commission. Close to 50 kids did not have electricity in home. Another surprising fact was 136 child labourers had their families, but despite that they had to work. Similarly, 117 kids of 152 kids were into permanent work and were not a part-time worker. Students also met officials of labour department, who pointed illiteracy as main reason for the practice. MPHRC additional director (public relations) LR Sisodia told TOI, "These are findings of a study conducted by interns and would be shared with departments for their reaction and the departments will also be asked about action they are going to take to check on illegal practice. (Times of India 1/7/15)

#### **‘Operation Muskan’ to trace 84 missing children (14)**

MYSURU: The Mysuru city police have launched ‘Operation Muskan’ to find 84 children, who have remained untraceable. This has been launched in response to the nationwide campaign to trace missing children, and will be held the whole of this month. A statement issued from the Police Commissioner’s office said all officials and personnel have been given necessary training and instructed to visit neighbouring States, if needed, to trace the children. The police have roped in representatives of District Child Protection Unit, Department of Labour, Women and Child Welfare Department, and NGOs engaged in the area of missing children. The police also urged the public to provide information about such children, if they come across them, to the nearest police station. Meanwhile, Fr. Francis John, Director of Don Bosco Makkalaya, told The Hindu that the police should look for runaway children in bus-stands and railway stations and make efforts to reunite them with their parents. The police should get in touch with childlines, the helplines for children run by NGOs in various cities, to trace them. They should look for missing children even in websites of NGOs like Don Bosco, which has a missing children bureau, where photos of runaway children are displayed. Pointing out that most missing children would have run away from homes and some could have been trafficked, Fr. Francis said chances of tracing girl children was higher as they do not go far, unlike the boys, who go from one city to another and take up jobs. Emphasising the need for the police to be “child-friendly” in their efforts to trace the missing children, Fr. Francis said it was better if such children are found early. “For, if they fall into the hands of anti-social elements, things will get difficult,” he said. (The Hindu 3/7/15)

#### **Identity cards for children's home inmates (14)**

COIMBATORE: The inmates of children's homes in the district would soon be issued identity cards as a measure of protection. The State Government had already issued directions to enrol all inmates for Aadhaar cards. Coimbatore district had a total of 78 children's homes having 4,436 children as inmates. The decision was taken after the District Child Protection unit led by District Child Protection Officer G. Vijaya held consultations with various Government agencies involved in protecting children's rights such as the Department of Social Welfare, National Child Labour Project, District Differently Abled Rehabilitation Officer, Integrated Child Development Services, Child Welfare Committee, Anti Human Trafficking Unit and Juvenile Special Unit of the police besides child Welfare Officers in the Railways and Tamil Nadu State Aids Control Society (TANSACS) personnel. A DCPU official said that it was also decided to strengthen the village committees formed to tackle child abuse and strengthen children's rights. They are headed by respective panchayat presidents with the local Block Development Officer being the convener. These committees would be asked to convene more frequently and would be used to spread awareness about child rights. Volunteers would also be roped in to conduct awareness programmes in rural areas. Further, visual content and games would be utilised to create awareness about child abuse in schools. A short film on child abuse would be shown initially in government schools. Special emphasis would be paid to train children on how to avoid getting kidnapped and avoid strangers. (The Hindu 6/7/15)

#### **Eight cases of child abuse every day but conviction rate at an abysmal 2.4% (14)**

NEW DELHI: Eight cases of sex crimes against children have been registered every day in the last two years. About 6,816 police cases were registered from November, 2012— when the Protection of Children against Sexual Offences Act (POCSO)—came into force up to March, 2015. The highest number of FIRs has been registered in Rajasthan followed by Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala according to data available with the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR). The number of convictions is only 166 that is 2.4% of the total cases registered while in 389 cases accused were acquitted. There is a rising trend of crime against children. This is also borne out by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data that has recorded 33,052 Cases, 38,172 cases and 58,224 cases during 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively. According to a study conducted by the WCD ministry in 2007, over half of the children surveyed reported having faced some form of sexual abuse, with their suffering exacerbated by the lack of specific legislation to provide remedies for these crimes. While rape is considered a serious offence under the Indian Penal Code, the law was deficient in recognizing and punishing other sexual offences, such as sexual harassment, stalking, and child pornography, for which prosecutors had to rely on imprecise provisions such as "outraging the modesty of a woman". Recognizing the problem, the government introduced POCSO to address rampant child sexual abuse through less ambiguous and more stringent legal provisions, championed the introduction of a specific law to address this offence. The law addresses crimes of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children. It defines different forms of sexual abuse, including penetrative and non-penetrative assault, as well as sexual harassment and pornography, and deems a sexual assault to be "aggravated" under certain circumstances, such as when the abused child is mentally ill or when the abuse is committed by a person in a position of trust or authority vis-a-vis the child, like a family member, police officer, teacher, or doctor. People who traffic children for sexual purposes are also punishable under the provisions relating to abetment in the Act. The Act prescribes stringent punishment graded as per the gravity of the offence, with a maximum term of rigorous imprisonment for life, and fine. (Times of India 9/7/15)

#### **91 child labourers rescued in Ganjam (14)**

BERHAMPUR: Ganjam police have rescued 91 children working at different places, including hazardous cashew processing units, in the last couple of days. "Raids were conducted on hotels, garages, shops

and cashew processing units in the district under Operation Muskan. The rescued children include 80 boys and 11 girls and four among them are from Bihar," DSP (crime) Subash Acharya said on Sunday. They are in the age group of 12 to 17, he added. The DSP said 13 children were found working in cashew processing units at Sorada (7) and Khallikote (6). Eleven among them are girls. Cashew processing unit is categorized as hazardous under Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986. "Two separate cases have been registered against owners of these units. We are investigating the circumstances under which these children were employed in these units and whether were they kept as bonded labourers." he said. The rescued children are under the custody of Childline, an NGO. "They will be produced before the district child welfare committee (CWC) and later handed over to their parents," the DSP added. In the last one month, a squad of the district-level monitoring committee rescued 22 children, 20 of them from Bihar, from sugarcane processing units and gup-chup making units in Berhampur. The squad comprised district labour officer, chairman of district child welfare committee, district child protection officer, police and campaigners. Lauding Operation Muskan, state convener, campaign against child labour, Sudhir Sabat said such operations can be more successful if police involve different agencies like the labour department, child protection units and voluntary organizations, working for protection of child rights. (Times of India 13/7/15)

#### **Child rights officials visit govt school (14)**

CHANDIGARH: Officials from the Chandigarh Commission for Protection of Child rights (CCPCR) visited the "Theatre Age" on premises of a government school on Tuesday. "Our primary motive was to ensure that children involved in theatre age were not left out of opportunities that they used to get in the NGO, mainly good education," said CCPCR chairperson professor Devi Sirohi. CCPCR officials were accompanied by members of the social welfare department, director child welfare committee, cluster heads and the school principal. The commission will now hold a meeting on Wednesday with NGOs/institutes and government bodies who have been dealing with children. Based on the list which has more than 50 children who were enrolled in theatre age, the commission will be meeting kids to ensure that they are not under pressure or facing trauma. The commission will also meet UT education department officials and suggest measures and discuss fate of these children. "We will ask if the extra classes can be held specially for these kids," she said. Talking about the issue, director public instruction (schools) Kamlesh Kumar said, "We will define more checks to rule out such incidents in the future. Moreover, no child related to theatre age will be left to suffer." When asked if he will take action against other NGO's operating in government schools, he said: "This was an isolated incident and all NGOs must not be held responsible. But we will be more careful in future before allotting space to such institutions." Officials from UT education department said that no student, who was part of "Theatre Age", will have their future at stake since all of them are already enrolled in some or the other government school. "Students were given extra classes in dance and drama there but they studied in government schools. So no student is bound to suffer," an official said. (Times of India 15/7/15)

#### **'Stop employing children below 18 years of age' (14)**

PUDUCHERRY: Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL), a group of non-governmental organisations, suggested to Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour to make employment of children below 18 years in all occupations illegal. The group has presented a memorandum to Rajya Sabha MP P.Kannan, Member, Standing Committee on Labour, in this regard. National Democratic Alliance Cabinet has approved the amendments to Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986 to prohibit employment of children below 14 years in all occupations and processes with a few exemptions. The Bill may be tabled during this Monsoon Session of the Parliament which starts on July 21. CACL national convener P. Joseph Victor Raj said, "Our position is that any person below the age of 18 is a child; and all children should study at least upto 12<sup>th</sup> Standard." Pointing out the increase in workforce of the unorganised sector, the CACL said it would be difficult for the Labour Departments in the States and Union Territories,

which already suffer lack of manpower, to inspect homes and find out whether the 'employer' is the natural parent/guardian or an entrepreneur. Similarly to establish that the children are working only after attending the School hours is also difficult. "There are no guidelines for the children working as artists in an audio-visual entertainment industry, which leads to prolonged working hours and sexual abuse too. Further, allowing children to work after school is detrimental to their health - as rest and recreation is important for their fullest physical and mental development in the formative years," said Mr. Victor Raj. (The Hindu 15/7/15)

#### **Illiteracy led to surge in child labour cases: Childline report (14)**

INDORE: Illiteracy and lack of administrative measures are the reason behind a surge in child labour cases in city in last four years. According to statistics procured from Childline, an NGO dealing with child rights, in 2012 there were around 101 cases (of which 57 were rescued by Childline), in 2013 the number went down to 85 (of which 52 were rescued), in 2014 the number was 104. But this year, 74 cases have been reported till June. Female children, who work as servants, are often exploited, according to an official from Childline. Women's empowerment officer Sanjay Bharadwaj said, "Child labour task force had done a commendable job in rescuing child labourers. Merely, two or three rescue operations are not enough so labour department should make sincere efforts and carry out frequent operations". Advocate Ajay Kumar Mishra said sometimes we have to face critical situations to present proper facts before court due to lack of coordination among departments concerned that contributed in rescue operations. "We can't deny that recently sexual abuse of girl child labourers has increased significantly," said Advocate Ajay Kumar Mishra. When asked about issues pertaining to increasing number of search operations, assistant labour commissioner J S Uday said, "Lack of time and coordination with other departments are the reasons why we are not able to carry out frequent rescue operations. However, we are getting good results from our task force established two years back". In charge, Childline in Indore, Vaseem Iqbal said, "Girls who are forced to work as maids are sometimes sexually abused. We have seen that 99.9% of the girls employed for domestic work are harassed in one or the other form". On other hand, district administration cited work pressure as the reason for not increasing number of rescue operations. "We are continuously working for children. Due to other assignments we have chosen only four days for rescue operations. We will take strong action to save girls from exploitation," said district collector P Narahari. We are continuously working for kids. Due to other assignments we have chosen only four days for rescue operations. We will take strong action to save girls from exploitation (Times of India 19/7/15)

#### **Operation Muskan Saves 58 Street Children in City (14)**

HYDERABAD: The North Zone police have rescued 58 children from Railway and Bus terminals, as well as establishments and roads as part of Operation Muskan programme. Deputy commissioner of police (DCP), North Zone, N Prakash Reddy said that 14 of the 58 children were handed over to their guardians/parents. The rest were sent to rescue homes. Meanwhile, 14 cases were booked against the owners of various establishments which were employing the rescued minors. Operation Muskan was launched on July 1 in all police limits of the North Zone with the intent to rescue missing children and minors who were forced into beggary, child labour, prostitution etc. The DCP has instructed all ACPs and inspectors of North Zone to serve notices to all establishments warning them about the consequences of employing children for work. Child Welfare Department is running a Toll Free Number 1098 for the rescue of children victimised under various issues. If any person notices minors under the above mentioned conditions, they should inform the toll free number 1098 or the Zonal nodal Officer of North Zone D Balaji, inspector of police, Cell No: 9490616030, the deputy commissioner of police said. (New Indian Express 22/7/15)

#### **TS And AP Top List of Child Rights Violators in Country (14)**

HYDERABAD:Forcing a child to stand in the Sun or kneel down for hours or caning him or her to instill discipline continue to be accepted as a common form of corporal punishment in schools. Despite government ban on corporal punishment and directives to follow guidelines set under the Right to Education (RTE) Act, continued violation of child rights is a cruel persisting truth. The State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) has registered 91 cases of violation of child rights across the two Telugu speaking states in 2014-15. Out of these, 63 pertain only to corporal punishment. The Commission has pointed out that these were the cases that had turned "sensational" and thus taken up suo motu. State-wise statistics issued out by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) for 2014-15 is a shocker. When it comes to complaints relating to Right to Education (RTE) received by NCPCR as on 31 December 2014, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana together registered a whopping 796 cases of the total 1391 from across the country! The Telugu States are followed by Delhi which has 98 pending complaints on the same date. Similarly, NCPCR's statewide details of complaints relating to Child Rights Violations or Deprivation during 2014-15 say 49 and 32 complaints were received from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana respectively. Of these, 17 and 21 are pending as on December 31, 2014. There are 56 types of punishments that are considered corporal by law and banned, says Achutha Rao, member of the SCPCR. According to him, the menace of corporal punishment is most prevalent in the Telugu States. "In every case, victim is the child. Private school managements, local politicians, education officers and policemen form a party and go against the victim's parents," he said, asking for strictest punishment for teachers involved in such cases. As of today, punishment for indulging in corporal punishment is imprisonment from 6 months to 3 years and a fine of Rs 25,000. "More than brutality in the name of punishments, a bigger threat is sexual offences. Only strictest of punishments can help innocent tiny tots," he added. (New Indian Express 24/7/15)

#### **50% garden kids drop out: Study (14)**

Guwahati, July 24: A study carried out by Save the Children, a child rights NGO, has painted a gloomy picture of the education scenario in the tea garden areas of Assam. A baseline study conducted by Save the Children along with two voluntary organisations of Sonitpur district - People Action for Development and Promotion and Advancement of Justice, Harmony and Rights of Adivasis - has revealed that about 50 per cent children do not attend schools regularly. Sharing excerpts of the study, state programme manager of Save the Children, Chittapriyo Sadhu, today said about 40 per cent school management committees are non-functional and only 30 per cent schools have separate toilet facilities for girls. The study also found that educational opportunities in the tea garden areas are limited to lower primary levels and most of the schools do not conform to the pupil-teacher ratio according to the RTE Act, which is 30:1. Sadhu said despite being associated with an industry that commands a significant share in the world tea market, a huge population of tea garden workers still live below the poverty line and are secluded from mainstream development. He said the culture of exclusion is also rooted in the history of seclusion of the tea garden communities from larger social fabric of the state. "Children are the worst sufferers as they are often caught in the vicious cycle of limited scope for quality education, dearth of opportunities for age appropriate life skills and vocational skill development and exclusion from social protection mechanism," he said. Sadhu, quoting the baseline study, said only 14 per cent of the girls and 12 per cent of the boys up to the age of three years access the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) services while just 19 per cent of the children access pre-primary education in ICDS centres, also known as Anganwadi kendras. There are 950 tea estates in the state accommodating approximately 60 lakh people, which account for 20 per cent of the state's population. Almost 24 lakh children live in the tea gardens of Assam. "Children are affected by poor health conditions, which can be largely attributed to inadequate water and sanitation facilities, lack of awareness about health care practices and poor nutritional gain. Hence, incidences of under nutrition and infectious diseases are widely prevalent," he said. According to a National Family Health Survey, about 60 per cent of the children are underweight and over 90 per cent of adolescent girls are reported anaemic. Manoj Kalinda, a Class X student from a tea garden at Gohpur

area in Sonitpur district, rued the absence of an Anganwadi centre in their area. He said alcoholism among tea garden workers is a major problem that affects their children. (The Telegraph 25/7/15)

#### **US highlights Satyarthi's 'relentless work' for children (14)**

Washington: Indian Nobel Peace Prize winner Kailash Satyarthi's "relentless work" and "peaceful struggle" to keep children in school, rather than in the workforce, has been highlighted in a new US report. "For more than four decades, Satyarthi has worked relentlessly for the rights of children and waged a peaceful struggle to keep children in school, rather than in the workforce," said the US State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report 2015. "He has helped to free children trapped in bonded labour, assisted them with vocational training and education, and challenged public discourse in India on child labour and child trafficking," it said. "His contributions have not only affected India, but have also changed the world," it said. In 1998, he organised the Global March Against Child Labour, the world's largest campaign against child labour that led to the adoption of ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour, the report noted. The world was formally introduced to "Satyarthi and his work fighting child labour when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014, together with child activist Malala Yousafzai", the report said. But in 2007, the US State Department, it recalled, recognised Satyarthi's contributions to the global fight against forced child labour by selecting him as one of 10 Trafficking in Persons Report Heroes. In January 2015, President Barack Obama and his wife Michelle Obama met Satyarthi and his wife Sumedha. Obama, the report recalled, said "... true measure of Kailash's efforts is not a single prize he has been awarded, but the tens of thousands of people who today live with freedom and dignity thanks to his efforts". In 1980, Satyarthi founded Bachpan Bachao Andolan (Save the Childhood Movement), which has removed more than 80,000 children from exploitation. Satyarthi also founded Good Weave in 1994, which now implements a certification scheme to ensure no child labour is used in the production of carpets in India, Nepal, and Afghanistan. (New Kerala 28/7/15)

#### **RTE, laws against child labour have failed, says judge (14)**

KALABURAGI: Principal District and Session Judge B.V. Patil has said that the Right to Education Act and the existing laws against child labour have failed to achieve their objective. Inaugurating a round-table conference on child labour, school dropouts and the present education system, organised by the Department of Public Instruction and Margadarshi Samsthe, a non-governmental organisation, on Wednesday, Mr. Patil said children were our greatest assets and their educational empowerment would strengthen India to face future challenges. Mr. Patil said that the high incidence of poverty in rural areas was one of the main reasons for the increasing incidents of child labour and raising number of school dropouts. "Children are forced to discontinue their studies and work to support the needs of their family. According to a survey, around 57 lakh children dropped out after completing their high school in India every year," he said. Referring to the life of the former President A.P. J. Abdul Kalam, he said the way in which Dr. Kalam overcame abject poverty in his family through educational empowerment should be a model for every student in the country. (The Hindu 30/7/15)

#### **2270 cases of violation of child rights in 2015 (14)**

PUNE: The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights has reported 2404, 3281, 3340 and 2270 cases of violation of child rights in 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16 (till 30.06.2015) respectively. The National Commission for Women has registered 16584, 22422, 32118 and 9786 cases of violation of rights of women in 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16 (till date) respectively. The reasons for violation of child rights include violations under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 and violation under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012. Child rights violations are also related to displacement, violence, trafficking, etc. The actions taken by National Commission for Protection of Child Rights include conduct of summon hearings and giving directions to

concerned officials, giving recommendations to State Governments, etc. The government has also enacted several laws such as the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, the Prohibition of Child marriage Act, 2006 and is implementing schemes for the protection of children such as the Integrated Child Protection Scheme, etc. The reasons for violation of women rights include: domestic violence, outraging the modesty of women, dowry harassment, property dispute, rape, etc. (Times of India 1/8/15)

#### **Govt plans to punish parents if children found engaged in child labour (14)**

New Delhi: The government plans to put in place provisions to punish parents whose children are found to be engaged in child labour, which has been seeing a declining trend. Union Minister Bandaru Dattatreya informed the Lok Sabha on Monday that the government has initiated multi-pronged action to eradicate child labour in the country. "The total number of working children in the age group of 5-14 years in the country has declined from 1.26 crore as per the Census 2001 to 43.53 lakh as per Census 2011," the Minister of State for Labour and Employment said during Question Hour. Replying to supplementaries, he said a legal provision is going to be put in place whereby parents will be punished and penalised if their children are found to be engaged in child labour activities. Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act 1986 prohibits employment of children below 14 years of age in 18 occupations and 65 processes. To curb the menace, inspections are conducted both by the Centre and the states. "The total number of inspections in the central and state sphere under Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986 during the last three years -- 2012, 2013 and 2014 were 1,89,018, 2,19,085 and 1,75,709, respectively," he said. (Zee News 2/8/15)

#### **Teenaged girl sold off for Rs. 2 lakh by dad, step-mom (14)**

CHITTOOR: A 13-year-old girl, who was sold off by her father and stepmother to a thrice-married 40-year-old man for Rs. 2 lakh, was rescued from Gudipala mandal in the district, in a joint operation conducted by the Bangarupalem police and the Rural Organisation for Poverty Eradication Services (ROPES), here on Sunday. According to the police, the victim's father Jayachandra, a farm labourer from Nallangadu village in Bangarupalem mandal got married to one Sumathi a few years ago, after his first wife had deserted him. Since then Sumathi had been harassing the girl and even forced her to quit school and take up menial jobs. Two months ago, Jayachandra and Sumathi struck a deal with one Krishnamurthy (40), a farmer from Gudipala mandal near Chittoor, and sold the girl to him for Rs. 2 lakh. The girl was handed over to Krishnamurthy on May 31 and he got married to her in a temple at Ratnagiri near Vellore in Tamil Nadu the same day. Police said Krishnamurthy, was married thrice in the past. His first wife had died, while the second one had deserted him. He was presently living with another woman, said to be his third wife. Meanwhile, the prolonged absence of the girl, who was studying in class VIII, from the school made her classmates suspicious and the neighbours too started inquiring about her from Sumathi. Sensing trouble, the neighbours alerted the police and the ROPES Childline, who rushed to Gudipala and rescued the girl. ROPES chairman K. Dhanasekhan said the girl would be handed over to the Children's Home in Tirupati on Monday. She would be produced before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) and referred to a hospital for medical examination. The Bangarupalem police said that a criminal case was registered against Krishnamurthy and steps would be taken to book cases against Jayachandra and Sumathi. (The Hindu 3/8/15)

#### **Rights panel chalks out plan for child beggars (14)**

CHANDIGARH: The Chandigarh Commission for Protection of Child Rights (CCPCR) has drawn an action plan for the city administration that includes guidelines for street children like creation of a special police team to rescue child beggars, more special homes for them, and de-addiction provisions to be made. The plan has been chalked out on the basis of mapping and survey of street children carried out by the commission. "After the survey, an analytical study on the subject has been done by the panel as

presented in the report and the commission has made recommendations to the administration providing an action plan to make Chandigarh a smart city in its true perspective," CCPCR chairperson Devi Sirohi said. The survey on child beggars was conducted by the students of Panjab University under the internship programme of CCPCR on the theme "eradicate child beggary in Chandigarh". The students, who were divided into five teams, encountered 1,224 child beggars, with 793 males and 431 females, in the 10-day survey. The teams interviewed 455 child beggars, of which 275 were males and 180 were females. The CCPCR also stated in the action plan that the administration should organize health camps and night shelter homes for street children. It has suggested that police personnel should be sensitized on the provision of law for child beggars, action to be taken against adults instigating child begging and procedures required rescuing a child. The rights body has also given action plans for religious places and market committees as these are the places where maximum child beggars are found. The plan also includes meeting of all religious leaders and market committees on the issues of child begging, a sustained campaign to discourage child beggars in the identified places as per mapping, a social awareness campaign and drives against child labour. (Times of India 6/8/15)

#### **Centre pushing for amendment to child labour laws (14)**

New Delhi: The government on Monday said it was pushing forward an amendment to the country's child labour laws, aimed at prohibiting children between 14 and 18 years of age to be employed in any hazardous occupation. "The government has introduced a bill in the Rajya Sabha to amend the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 which along with the proposed Official amendments, inter alia, covers prohibition of employment of adolescent (14-18 years) in hazardous occupations and processes," union Labour and Employment Minister Bandaru Dattatreya said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha on Monday. He was responding to a question raised by Congress member Shashi Tharoor over a report by the International Labour Organisation which claimed India to be employing 2.4 million adolescents -- the highest in the world -- in hazardous jobs. The minister said the bill has provisions for punishment for employing adolescents in contravention of the act's provisions. Creation of a Child and Adolescent Labour Rehabilitation Fund has also been proposed. (Business Standard 10/8/15)

#### **356 children in distress rescued in two years (14)**

Hubballi: Girls outnumbered boys in the list of children who were in distress and rescued by the District Child Protection Unit. Of the 356 children protected by the district child protection unit officials in last two years, 180 are girls, and 176 boys. The unit has protected 169 girls and 165 boys in 2013-14 and 11 each in 2014-15 till date, stated a release. Most of such children fall under the category of migrated children (116 girls and 125 boys) followed by rag pickers (19 girls and 15 boys) and children engaged in beggary (12 each). Besides, seven girls and four boys engaged as child labourers, eight boys addicted to drugs were also rescued. The officials had rescued 27 children (23 girls and four boys) from the Hubballi railway station last year and one girl and seven boys from Dharwad railway station this year, the release added. (The Hindu 12/8/15)

#### **Bring children up to age of 18 years under RTE Act: Activists (14)**

MUMBAI: Bringing children up to the age of 18 years under the Right to Education (RTE) Act, was one of the main suggestions that has come up in a meeting organised by city-based NGOs working for child rights. The meeting was organised to discuss the provisions that need to be included in the Child Labour Amendment Bill that is under consideration at the centre. The activists plan to draw a charter of their demands and submit it to the government of India. "The main point that we all agreed upon was that children up to the age of 18 years should be in schools and nowhere else. While there is a debate that children up to the age of 14 years can work in family enterprises we are opposed to that. Children are also exploited in domestic work," said child rights' activist Santosh Shinde. He added that rescue and rehabilitation work should be clarified in the act. NGOs like Pratham, Yuva, Committed Communities

Development Trust (CCDT), Child Rights and You (CRY), Childline, Save The Children participated in the discussion and have come up with suggestions that will strengthen the Act. (Times of India 13/8/15)

#### **Six corporation schools to be home to street children (14)**

CHENNAI: For generations, these children have lived on streets, with their families. While their parents find a livelihood in the vicinity, they go to a nearby school. But when they reach high school, reality hits. The academic burden and the state of being homeless come as a double whammy, and many of them drop out of school. To tackle the situation, Chennai Corporation is setting up six shelters for such children, within its schools. This decision was taken after a Chennai-based survey reported that while most street children attend primary and middle school, only 58% of them go to a high school. The survey released in July by NGO Information and Resource Centre for the Deprived Urban Communities (IRCDUC) studied six zones in Chennai that are hotspots for the homeless. It found that while there was a 19% of children dropped out between the age of six and 14, the rate went up to 42% in the case of children in the age group of 15-18 years. Street life was definitely not conducive for children to continue in school, the report said. The city corporation is responsible for providing shelters for the urban homeless under the National Urban Livelihood Mission. Chennai Corporation is planning to follow a model under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan that manages homes for out-of-school children. "We have begun the process of refurbishing the buildings. We have collaborated with six NGOs to maintain the shelters," said a senior corporation official. In the first phase, four schools - two each for boys and girls - will come up in the zones of Royapuram, Anna Nagar and Teynampet. Once the corporation builds kitchens and toilets and sources study material and beds, the NGOs will frame rules for the administration of the shelters, tuition, appointment of wardens, food, and social activities. "The idea is to run the schools and keep the children happy," the official said. The first batch of such residential schools will open this academic year. IRCDUC will help the corporation identify out-of-school children. "A residential school set up for urban homeless children will provide a school ambiance that motivates children to embrace education," says Vanessa Peter, a policy researcher at IRCDU. "It costs less, and involves school headmasters, teachers, government departments and civil society. Participation of several stakeholders ensure transparency and guards against child abuse." The corporation, meanwhile, is awaiting the chief minister's appointment to open two residential facilities at its schools in Saidapet and Teynampet, where 60 boys and 60 girls of Classes 11 and 12 would live and study on the school premises. (Times of India 16/8/15)

#### **NGO frees children from shackles of labour, leads them onto path of education (14)**

MUMBAI: " I was admitted to Class I six years ago, but just a few months later, I had to stop going to school because some other students stole the money my mother would give me," recalled 13 year-old Nisha Pawar. Now a student of Class V at Colaba municipal school, she aspires to become a police officer in the future. Pawar was among the 132 children felicitated on Tuesday by Pratham, an NGO, to encourage them to continue schooling. The children, who were forced into child labour and found at traffic signals and railway platforms, were rescued by the Pratham Council for Vulnerable Children (PCVC) this year. Of the children being felicitated, many were rescued from places like Kurla station, Mankhurd and Malad. " We started 20 years ago, with a vision to let every child go to school but we wanted to function with the government, not as an independent NGO. The authorities and government have done a wonderful job. School principals have cooperated whenever we went to them to seek admission for these children," said Farida Lambe, co-founder, Pratham. A first year BCom student, Mohsin Shaikh, who learnt music and has earlier performed in Australia, had been rescued by the NGO at the age of 9. State education minister Vinod Tawde, also present at the ceremony, said, " The work that is supposed to be done by the government is done by NGOs like Pratham. This is the first step towards a better society. There is a need to adopt methods to track students' attendance to ensure they stay in school." " In 2014, the Mumbai police force rescued over 12,000 children. Many who fail exams turn to drugs, which can be

curbed if these incidents are reported to us," said Pravinkumar Patil, deputy commissioner of police (enforcement), who was also present at the function. (Times of India 19/8/15)

#### **Officials Turning Blind Eye to Illegal Migration of Child Workers? (14)**

**SRIKAKULAM:** The delayed reaction of the district officials in cracking down on the illegal migration of children for labour work to other states is turning the bane of thousands of children. The concerned authorities have remained silent over the issue for years, though such incidents have been happening for a while. Officials mostly concentrated on arresting child labour in the district, while transportation of kids continued unabated. Since October 2011, the district officials have rescued just 75 children, out of which almost 60 were rescued this year. Sources said that after a local private NGO complained about the trade to the district collector recently, action has been initiated this year. But already, thousands of children are working and the alarming activity has become a common practice in the rural areas of the district. Lack of awareness campaigns against such sort of activities is said to be the major reason behind their occurrence. Also, lack of employment opportunities is also another important aspect. On Monday, parents of the rescued children staged a protest demanding that the authorities return the children to them. Out of the 75 children rescued, only 25 children have been reunited with their parents so far. The disturbing aspect here is that the parents wanted the release of their children so that they can be sent to other states for work, even against their will. A fisherman from Badivanipeta, M Sri Ramulu, said, "There are no jobs here and the government has never bothered about us. We are not sending our children for child labour, but their work over there is helping us clear our debts and lead our lives here." Helping Hands Association, Srikakulam, vice president D Venkateswarlu said that the officials are maintaining a blind eye over the issue, leading to such a situation. "The officials need to conduct more awareness programmes in village and mandal levels to stop this. Moreover, literate people in fishermen villages should come forward and educate others," he added. Since this illegal trade came to light, officials in Srikakulam district have intensified vigilance at Railway Stations and bus stations, apart from rescuing around 197 kids working in shops, restaurants and other offices. Apart from the child migration issues, 89 school dropouts have been rescued and counselled to return to their education. Six street children and 51 child beggars were rescued and sent to Child Welfare Houses. Officials also stopped 314 child marriages, and got written bonds from parents of 219 children, and sent the others to homes. They have also booked 14 cases of sexual harassment. (New Indian Express 21/8/15)

#### **Over 13k girls became mothers before turning 15: Census (14)**

**JAIPUR:** As many as 13,868 girls in the state who have not attained 15 years of age have given birth to not one but two children. At a tender age of under-15, the girls have given birth to two children. According to health experts, giving birth to babies before 18 years of age could be a risky affair for mothers and their infants. According to recently released Census 2011, the figures show that once the mistake was done, it was repeated. As per the figures of Census 2011, 1.66 lakh girls were married before they attained the age of 15 years. The figure is a cause for concern for those involved in spreading awareness about child marriages and maternal health. "Teen pregnancies happen due to child marriages. The pregnancies in early age are quite risky as there are chances of complications due to various factors," said Dr Suman Mittal, president, Jaipur Obstetrics and Gynaecology Society (JOGS). Despite various government programmes spreading awareness about the ill-effects of early marriages and adolescent pregnancies, the situation is not rosy. The Census shows that in an age group of 15-19, as many as 17,793 girls have given birth to four children. It is contrary to the health department's appeal which says that girls should not get married before 18 years of age, and after marriage, a couple should not bear a child for the first two years. The Census shows that before attaining the age of 20 years, more than 17,793 women gave birth to four children and 13,988 gave birth to three children. There are various surveys conducted by NGOs in different parts of the state which show high prevalence of anaemia among adolescent girls which becomes a risk factor for maternal and infant mortality. The health department allocates funds to reduce

maternal mortality ratio and infant mortality rate, but early marriages and adolescent pregnancies are still a cause for concern for the health authorities. (Times of India 22/8/15)

#### **Alarming spurt in crimes against kids (14)**

BHUBANESWAR: A sharp spike in violent crimes such as rape, murder and abduction against children in the state has been seen in latest findings of National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). In 2013, the number of such cases was 1,123, which nearly doubled to 2,196 last year. Although the state did not report any case relating to purchase or sale of girl children for prostitution last year, cases of rape and abduction were high. About 755 minor girls were raped in Odisha last year up from 509 in 2013. A total of 802 children were kidnapped in 2014 while the figure stood at 366 in 2013. "Almost all the rapes and abductions were committed by close acquaintances or relatives of the rape survivors. Most of the cases were reported from slum areas," said a police officer. "The abduction cases relate to elopement by minor girls," the officer said. Crimes against children occurred unabated in Odisha's capital city as well. Official statistics said 43 minor girls were allegedly raped in Bhubaneswar last year compared to 27 in 2013 and two in 2012, indicating the vulnerability of minor girls to crimes. The arrest of an auto-rickshaw driver here on December 10, 2014, on charges of molesting a minor girl was the most sensational. The 17-year-old girl from Jajpur had come to a private university near Jatni to take admission for a vocational course on tailoring when the driver gave her lift and molested her. She jumped off the auto-rickshaw and was rescued by some locals. On December 28, 2014, the parents of a 10-year-old girl from Saliasahi lodged a complaint with Mahila police station alleging that some men forcibly engaged her in prostitution. Police arrested seven persons. "In many cases, the accused got a clean chit in court due to poor investigation by the police. And in some cases, victims and their families turned hostile, leading to the acquittal of the accused. The government should strengthen the Mahila and Sishu desks at police stations and improve infrastructure in courts to ensure speedy trials," said Anuradha Mohanty, a child rights activist. (Times of India 25/8/15)

#### **Protect rights of kids below 6: Law panel (14)**

NEW DELHI: The Law Commission of India has recommended amendments to the Constitution to ensure an enforceable right to basic care, protection, health and education for children below six years of age. While the government has a policy on early childhood care and education in 2013, it is not enforceable under law. The commission said that early childhood is the phase of "maximum vulnerability" and deprivation can seriously impact a child's health and learning potential. In its report to the law ministry the commission has also sought amendments to ensure maternity leave for up to 180 days and creation of a statutory authority for early childhood development to ensure "proper emphasis" on the promotion of early childhood development. It has also suggested that government formulate policy for laying down minimum specifications of paid maternity leave for private sector companies. The recommendations come in response to demands made by child rights activists including representatives of Alliance for Right to Early Childhood Care & Development and Mobile Creches, who highlighted the issue relating to the rights of children under the age of six years. The law panel suggested that as per the recommendation of the National Commission for Review of Constitution, a new Article, 24A, be inserted to Part III of the Constitution to ensure that the child's right to basic care and assistance becomes an enforceable right. "The Article should read as follows: '24A. Every child shall have the right to care and assistance in basic needs and protection from all forms of neglect, harm and exploitation'," the report said. To extend the Right to Education to children in the under-6 age group as well, Article 21A of the Constitution should be amended, it said and recommended that the amended Article should read as: "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children in such a manner as the State may by law determine." It pointed out that as of now, issues relating to interests and welfare of young children "remain locked" in Part IV of the Constitution that incorporates Directive Principles of State Policy. The Commission has also

suggested that Right to Education be made mandatory and children are provided access to pre-school education, services like creche and day care. (Times of India 28/8/15)

#### **NGOs fear new bill will perpetuate child labour (14)**

PANAJI: Pro Child Network, an umbrella organization of various groups working for children's rights, has raised concerns about the proposed amendment to the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act by the government of India. The proposed amendment allows children below 14 years of age to work in family enterprises, agriculture, artisanship, entertainment industry (except circus) "after school hours". The amendment is likely to drag more children into unregulated conditions of work. The Pro Child Network further observes that this law is not in line with the Right to Education Act that entitles children between 6 to 14 years of age to free and compulsory education. The parliamentary standing committee examining the 2012 bill, which already proposed a similar amendment bill, states: "The ministry is itself providing loopholes by inserting this proviso since it would be very difficult to make out whether children are merely helping their parents or are working to supplement the family income. Further, allowing children to work after school is detrimental to their health as rest and recreation is important for their physical and cognitive development." More children are likely to be trafficked to work in 'home-based' environments as nobody will check whether they belong to the same family or not. Since most family-based occupations in India are caste-based, this bill will only keep the caste system intact and not give children an opportunity to learn new, employable trades. The network has anticipated that the amendment will only perpetuate invisible forms of child labour and exploitation of children. (Times of India 2/9/15)

#### **566 petitions related to child rights' disposed off in three years (14)**

NAMAKKAL: The Tamil Nadu State Commission for Protection of Child Rights has disposed off 566 petitions related to child rights in the past three years, said its Commissioner Saraswathi Rangasamy. Addressing reporters here, she said that since the inception of the Commission in 2013, it has received 716 petitions of which action were taken against 566 petitions and disposed off. She said that the balance petitions were sent to the departments concerned for necessary actions. As many as nine children who were sexually harassed were given compensation of Rs. 18 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. It includes, two children from Namakkal district, she added. The Commissioner added that schools in 20 districts were inspected for verifying whether 25 per cent admissions were made under the Right to Education Act. Earlier, she inspected children homes in Velagoundampatti, Elanagar and Varadarajapuram and verified the records and interacted with the students. Also, the maintenance of the homes, drinking water facility, food quality, toilet facilities was inspected. District Child Protection Officer M. Selvam was present. (The Hindu 5/9/15)

#### **Officials to monitor child workers employed in cotton fields (14)**

SALEM: With cross-pollination in hybrid seed production expected to commence from September-end in the district, officials are gearing up to prevent migrant child workers being employed by the farmers. Children below 14 years, particularly girls, are employed in BT cotton seed production in Attur, Thalaivasal and Pethanaickenpalayam blocks for cross pollination activities that has to be carried out from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. everyday till December. Children are the most preferred as they have nimble fingers, ability to work for longer hours and considered as cheap labour. They are mostly from Javadu Hills in Tiruvannamalai, Vellimalai in Villupuram, Kalvarayan Hills in Salem and from Kolli Hills in Namakkal districts. Despite warning by officials of Society for Monitoring and Implementation of Child Labour Elimination, Unicef and other departments, farmers continue to engage children less than 18 years. Last year, officials conducted raids in cotton fields in the blocks and rescued child workers less than 14 years. Cases were also registered against farmers and the police arrested them. Sources said that advance amount for children have already been paid by the farmers and they would start coming

from other districts by September-end. They said that by first week of October cross-pollination activity would begin in the fields. District Child Protection Officer A. Devagi told The Hindu that surprise checks would be conducted in the agricultural fields from next week and farmers who have cultivated BT-cotton crops would be monitored. She said that children below 14 years would be rescued and action will be taken against the farmers. Also, children below 18 years would be sent home and rehabilitation measures would be worked out for them. (The Hindu 6/9/15)

#### **1.10 lakh child labourers work on Gujarat's fields: NGO report (14)**

Ahmedabad: Gujarat accounts for 55 per cent of the country's child labour working in cottonseed production and the total number of children working in such fields has reached 1.10 lakh, according to an NGO study report released here on Wednesday. The study report was released by two city-based NGOs, namely Prayas and Majur Adhikar Manch. "Gujarat, which has the largest cottonseed production area in the country accounts for nearly 55 per cent of total children employed in this sector (1.10 lakh)," reads a study 'Cotton's Forgotten Children' conducted by social rights activist Davuluri Venkateswarlu for the NGO India Committee of the Netherlands. Research data for 2014-15 showed that children under 14 years still account for nearly 25 per cent of the total workforce in cottonseed farms in India, the report stated. In 2014-15, around two lakh children below 14 years were employed in cottonseed fields in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Rajasthan, the report stated. Citing findings of the report that the caste factor plays a huge role in child labour, a city-based rights activist Ramesh Shrivastava said that "Around 70 per cent of child labourers are from tribal communities and 4.5 per cent of these children hail from Schedules Castes, while 18.6 per cent of such child labourers of Other Backward Class (OBC) and 6.7 per cent are from other castes". Most child labourers hail from the tribal belt of Gujarat namely Dahod, Chhota Udaipur and Sabarkantha districts, he said. In Gujarat, around 56.7 per cent of child labourers had to drop out of schools while 34.3 per cent of them continued to go to school but work during the peak season, he said. (Zee News 9/10/15)

#### **Unregistered NGOs can't run children homes, rules SC (14)**

New Delhi: The Supreme Court said on Friday that no unregistered NGO would be permitted to run children homes as it expressed apprehension that some of these too may be engaged in child trafficking. Asking the central government to ensure that shutters were pulled down on the children homes being run by unregistered NGOs, the social justice bench of Justice Madan B. Lokur and Justice Uday Umesh Lalit said that the child trafficking a very serious offence under the law and against humanity. "Some of the girls are used in trafficking and it is possible that that some of the NGOs are involved in the trafficking and if the state is not checking it then it too is complicit. "Be clear about it. Not a single unregistered NGO will have a children's home," the court told Additional Solicitor General P.S. Patwalia appearing for the central government. "It is better than being trafficked," the court said as Patwalia said that in the event of asking the unregistered NGOs to shut down their children homes, these children will have to be moved out. Stressing there could be no compromise on the safety of children, the court said that "child trafficking is a very serious offence in law and trafficking is a very serious offence against humanity". Its observation came in the course of the hearing of a PIL by Sampurna Behura where an affidavit filed by the central government revealed that in Assam, there was a larger inflow and outflow of girls in the children homes compared to boys. Confronting the figures, the court asked Patwalia what were the corresponding figures for the boys leaving children homes. In indictment of the insensitivity of the authorities who were totally unaware of the whereabouts of a girl after she leaves children's home, Justice Lokur observed: "Nobody knows that." His riposte came as Patwalia told the court: "When they move out, they may have joined their families." The court also asked the ASG as to what he meant by "When they move out". Asking the central government to pull up its socks, the court said that "so far what you have been doing is writing letters. Much more has to be done. There are enough people to keep. There are thousands of NGOs which are genuine and willing to help children" in distress. (New Kerala 11/9/15)

#### **Cops' role to be probed in child labour rescue case (14)**

NOIDA: Gautam Budh Nagar district magistrate NP Singh on Friday ordered a probe into the role of police after a 12-year-old girl tortured and starved by her employer was handed over to her family without a proper investigation. The DM deputed the district probation officer to conduct the probe and said strict action would be taken against officials found guilty. The child labour, who is from Lakhimpur Khiri in Uttar Pradesh, was rescued by NGO Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) on Tuesday from the clutches of her employer after she jumped from his flat on the 13th floor to the balcony of one on the 12th in Exotica Fresco residential society in Noida's Sector 137 on Monday night. TOI on Friday reported that the child welfare committee on Wednesday handed over the girl to her family on the grounds that she had come to the city on a tour, which triggered protests from the NGO on Thursday. The BBA has also alleged that initially the police had tried to hush up the case and hand over the girl to her employer. "After reading the TOI report, I have ordered a probe into the matter. I have directed the district probation officer to check the facts and the role of cops into the matter. After getting a statement from the child welfare committee, we will decide on further course of action. If cops are found guilty of not presenting the exact facts to the committee, then stringent action will be taken against officials concerned," Singh said. The child welfare committee also tried to pass the buck on the police. "The cops have misled the committee. They did not produce the copy of the FIR before us. They only showed us the general diary entry. We will soon lodge a complaint against police officials concerned with the Gautam Budh Nagar SSP," child welfare committee member Jaiveer Yadav said. Commenting on the development, BBA's director (victim assistance) Rakesh Senger said, "The cops are guilty in the case. The child welfare committee should have also thoroughly investigated the matter on its part and not relied on the cops. The committee should have recorded the girl's statement under Section 164 of CrPC. We have complained against the cops and the committee to the UP Child Rights Commission." (Times of India 12/9/15)

#### **85% kid abuse cases pending in Delhi courts (14)**

NEW DELHI: The overall average percentage of pending cases under Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) in children's courts in Delhi between April 2013 and March 2014 was 85% with the west district having the highest pendency of about 93%, reports Ambika Pandit. In a shocking finding, the average pendency in Delhi's children's courts during the financial year 2013-14 of cases registered under Protection Of Children from Sexual Offences Act has been revealed to be as high as 85%, with West district recording the maximum of 93%. The data, thrown up in an analysis by Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights, shows gross violation of Section 35(2) of POCSO Act, which mandates completion of trials as fast as possible. The report, which describes the statistics as a "sorry picture", also calculates the average percentage of convictions to be about 2%. Just 15% cases are disposed of. "This commission feels that such a high percentage of pendency and low percentage of conviction can be attributed to the fact that children's courts are not fully dedicated to the cases. They handle matters related to children in addition to usual cases allotted to them. As a result, the legal requirement that the case be disposed of within a year is not being adhered to," says the report. The DCPCR report studies trends based on data provided by police and other stakeholders since enactment of POCSO Act. The total number of cases registered by Delhi Police under the Act between December 2012 and March 2014 is 1,492. The maximum number of cases under POCSO Act was registered in the police district of Outer Delhi (226) followed by West (200) and Southeast (176). The highest percentage of sexual abuse of children by known persons was reported from Outer district again (94 cases) followed by Southeast (93 cases) and South/Central districts (91 cases). The average percentage of such crimes is 89%.... (Times of India 15/9/15)

#### **Rising number of juveniles turning sexually abusive, say experts (14)**

CHENNAI: In her research on 40 juvenile sex offenders in the Philippines, Zenaida S Rosales noticed a common thread - all of them had witnessed some form of violence (not necessarily sexual) in their social environment. "It could be any kind of violence - physical to quarrelling to just a chaotic home environment," says Rosales, co-founder, Centre for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse based in the Philippines. She presented her findings in the city on Tuesday at a conference on addressing sexual violence against children organised by Chennai-based Tulir -Centre for the Prevention and Healing of Child Sexual Abuse. While, so far, there are no studies documenting the behaviour and personality traits of juvenile sex abusers in Chennai, those working in the field feel the findings are relevant for India as well. According to Rosales's findings, exposure to pornography was another big factor that contributed to their sexually abusive behavior. "In the Philippines, we get WiFi. You don't even need money to access pornography," says Rosales. Her study also showed that a majority of the juvenile offenders were school dropouts and were acting out because of their low self-esteem. "There has been a spike in the number of juvenile child sex offenders but there are no official statistics because it is not taken seriously. Most cases are just swept under the carpet," says Vidya Reddy of Tulir, who spearheaded the conference. "Technology is a big contributor to sexual crimes committed by children," she says. While the National Crime Records Bureau does not go into specifics, the 2014 statistics show that there were 12 cases of rape committed by juvenile offenders in Tamil Nadu. All India, the number of juveniles under the age of 12 booked for rape stands at 23, while there are 632 cases involving children over 12. Social workers in the city say that is nowhere near the real figures, with most cases being ignored as they involve children. Reddy recalls several incidents of schools calling her organisation in a panic - "it is always in a panic", she says - when they come across incidents of older children sexually abusing younger children. "The school management 'handles' it by merely suspending the offender. Some think a good beating is enough. Real intervention is handling the problematic sexual behaviour. Otherwise the offender is back in school after a week, probably angrier and more violent than ever," she says... (Times of India 16/9/15)

#### **Unequal Access to Education Drives Child Labour in India: Study (14)**

SYDNEY: Despite economic prosperity and dramatic fall in poverty levels, unequal access to education ensures hundreds of millions of children remain trapped in child labour in developing countries including India, says a new study by Indian-origin researchers. For the study, Jayanta Sarkar and Dipanwita Sarkar from Queensland University of Technology Business School in Australia compared levels of child labour and schooling across economic groups in India, Peru and Ethiopia. They developed an innovative overlapping generations economic model to explain how child labour stubbornly persists despite falling poverty in developing countries. The "fixed private cost" of schooling meant the poor had less access to education relative to the rich, a key driver in child labour among the poor, Sarkar said. "Typically schooling, even in a 'free' education system, imposes a large burden on the poor through the fixed costs of things like transportation to and from school and books and other materials," he pointed out. The research found that income inequality may matter more than poverty in explaining why child labour continues. "The analysis shows that families below a level of relative income choose zero schooling and full time labour for their children because they simply can't afford either the fixed schooling costs, or to miss out on the small income their children generate for the household," Sarkar noted. "Instead of schooling, they invest in child health to ensure children possess physical capability to perform unskilled work," he said. Figures from The World Bank show the number of people living on less than \$1.25 per day decreased dramatically from half the citizens in the developing world in 1981 to 21 percent in 2010, despite a 59 percent increase in the developing world population. However UNICEF estimates 246 million children are still engaged in child labour. "There is a clear link between income inequality and intensity of child labour. But, more income does not always reduce child labour. In fact, as wages rise child labour rises in families who find schooling too expensive," Sarkar said. "Only after income reaches a certain 'threshold' level, does schooling become affordable and child labour start to fall. The 'threshold' rises with

the degree of income inequality," he said. Sarkar said that simply banning child labour would actually end up hurting the poor as child income would dry up and as a result private investment in health would fall. He said a child labour ban had to be accompanied by an increase in access to education. "Two policies that could help eliminate child labour are targeted attempts to reduce schooling costs for the poor, and raising the efficacy of public health infrastructure," Sarkar noted. (New Indian Express 21/9/15)

### **The study was published in the journal Economic Inquiry.**

Satyarthi's Nobel effort finally puts child slavery in list of UN's sustainable development goals (14)

NEW DELHI: When global leaders gather in New York later next week to discuss and adopt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), child slavery will form an important part of those goals. What a difference a Nobel Peace Prize can make. In 1999, when he was just another NGO for children's rights, Kailash Satyarthi tried to persuade the rest of the world to include child labour, in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). "I believe without eradicating child labour, we would not be able to fulfil other goals like education or adult employment. ... But it was not attended properly, because five years ago it was just an emerging global idea, so it was very hard to pitch. During those years, in many UN summits, I organized side events to push the idea." He was better prepared this time. When the world started working on the SDGs, "we very carefully and systematically started working with those involved in this discussion - governments, NGOs, everyone." But the world had also become a slightly better place in some respect. "The number of child labourers had decreased worldwide, from 260 million to 168 million. The number of out-of-school children also declined from 130 million to 58 million. So significant progress has been made," Satyarthi told TOI in an exclusive chat. But child slavery figures had not only stayed constant, but even increased. "That data has not changed -- 5.5 million children in conditions of slavery. Non-government statistics as well as internal figures of UN agencies shows it to be even higher. The number is between 5.5 million to 8.5 million. My sense is, these numbers have increased. Modern forms of slavery, including trafficking of children, has become one of the most lucrative trades in the world. That's why the numbers have increased." He felt it was important to include these goals in the SDGs. But most governments were chary of talking about uncomfortable issues like child slavery. "Who will accept that slavery exists in their own countries? It was quite hard, and many governments thought it is a delicate matter. For the past year I have met many governments, special envoys, in their capitals and in NY. But it still found no mention in the drafts." But the Nobel Peace Prize changed all that. Since then, world leaders have been beating a path to Satyarthi's door. He has met UN secretary general Ban ki Moon twice, President of South Korea, Prime Ministers of Norway, Sweden, and a host of other countries where he used his new global fame to push the idea that the world needs to tackle child slavery with a special focus. "I met President Obama and told him, this was a request from one Nobel laureate to another. He promised to take up the cause." So did Ban ki Moon. And all the issues he has championed - child slavery, education, violence and child labour are now part of the SDGs. Satyarthi and Modi will address the same SDG summit next week. But where is India in implementing laws to protect children from violence and slavery? Nowhere really. "I met Mr Modi a couple of times. I have requested him to ratify the International Convention on the worst forms of child labour and convention on the minimum age of employment." India, shockingly, stands with Sudan and Eritrea as being a handful of countries to not have ratified the convention. "Modi listened to me carefully, and promised a child labour law. Many of his officers had an excuse - until we make a more clear domestic law, we cannot ratify the international convention. But that is an excuse. Most countries have synced their domestic laws to international laws, India can too." A draft law exists, he said, but it needs a debate. "I have written to every single parliament member. Children are not going to wait, who are languishing in slavery. They are losing lungs, eyes, kidneys every day. If there is a law we have a tool to fight it." (Times of India 23/9/15)

### **Child rights experts ask govt to review acts related to children (14)**

NEW DELHI: Leading child rights experts have asked the government to review existing legal instruments and acts related to children, and more budget allocations for Right to Education (RTE) and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). At a two-day national consultation organised by NGO Aide-et-Action in collaboration with UNESCO and Bernard van Leer Foundation, the experts recommended setting up of a database on migrants both at source and destination, policy on portability of child related schemes, ensuring decent housing in a healthy environment at destination and access to basic facilities. "In order to improve the attendance in schools, the government is proposing a monthly scholarship of Rs 100 per child till the standard VIII to motivate them to attend the school regularly," joint secretary of bureau of labour welfare Bipin Bihari Mallick said at the meeting. The delegates also recommended 25% reservation for children of disadvantaged groups may be extended to migrant children in the RTE, exchange of information between different ministries like the women and child development, labour, education and social welfare, formation of a national alliance of civil society organizations working on children's rights and migration to channelize support system for advocacy mechanism. CREDAI secretary Suresh Hari stressed on the need of government to utilize the taxes paid by the public towards the welfare of migrant workers and their children. "Temporary distress migration is the major reason for high dropout and low attendance in schools. Added to this, there is a need to understand the patterns of the migrant children with the support of School Management Committees and teachers which will help evolve an inclusive policy for the migrant children in cities," UNESCO's section chief and programme specialist, Marina Faetanini said. On this occasion, Childhood on the Move (Lives of young Migrants in Pictures), a photo document was also released. (Times of India 26/9/15)

#### **Six child labourers rescued from Ambala (14)**

AMBALA: Six child labourers were on Monday rescued from a market in Ambala city by a joint team of district child protection department and NGO officials. Acting on a specific information, six children in the age group of 8 to 14 years from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, working as labourers at some shops in the grain market were rescued, district child protection officer Megha Singla said. These children had come to Ambala along with some of their relatives who had engaged them at the shops, the officer said. The rescued children were taken to the civil hospital for medical examination and later shifted to a shelter home in Ambala Cantonment, Singla said, adding their parents have been informed. (Times of India 28/9/15)

#### **ILO plans to eradicate child labour in Myanmar (14)**

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is planning to eradicate child labour in Myanmar by running a pilot project next year, media report said on Saturday. The four-year model pilot project will be implemented in three areas -- Yangon, Ayeyarwady regions and Mon state, focusing on over 3,600 children and their family members, Xinhua news agency cited the Myawady daily as reporting. Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security in cooperation with ILO is compiling a report on child labour which is to be released in November. Most of the children, from poverty-stricken families, are employed at tea shops in cities like Yangon and Mandalay. (New Kerala 3/10/15)

#### **Govt urged to adopt child protection policy (14)**

VISAKHAPATNAM: Following the tragic death of six-year-old Ch Sai Lavanya Aditi at HB Colony after she was washed away in a drainage canal, the child rights activists and civil society groups, including RTE Forum, AP Alliance for Child Rights, Dhimsa Foundation, Nature, and Bala Vikas Foundation (BVF) have urged the state government to instruct gram panchayats to adopt a child-friendly protection policy to ensure safety and protection of children between 0-18 years of age. Such incidents are in violation of child rights that are ensured by the Constitution and therefore the government should see to the safety and protection of lives of children, who comprise 35% of the population of the state. Adoption of child

protection policies alone will safeguard the rights of children, said BVF secretary N Prakasa Rao. While drafting the child rights protection policy, the issues that should be taken care of include mapping of child rights violations and vulnerable areas, convergence among child welfare institutions to maintain safeguards and standards, display of grievance redressal mechanisms in all child related institutes (catering to those from 0-18 years), review and follow-up of existing child rights protection mechanism and laws in true spirit, proper utilisation of statutory structures and bodies by the administration, declaration and practicing of Child Protection Intervention Protocols and rescue operations through intra-sectoral cooperation and accountability, supporting law enforcement wings for proper implementation of existing policies and laws, promotion and greater involvement of public and civic groups in highlighting child protection and safeguard issues such as defunct manholes and risky areas through periodical consultations. "Sensitisation of the community, service providers and duty bearers on child rights protection mechanisms and role of stakeholders is also warranted," said S Balaraju, founder-director of NGO Nature. (Times of India 4/10/15)

#### **741 child labourers to be enrolled in schools (14)**

KAKINADA: The Department of Labour has identified 741 child labourers in East Godavari district and is making arrangements to enrol them in schools, according to Deputy Commissioner of Labour Y. Krishna Reddy. Addressing a review meeting on child labour at the Collectorate here, Mr. Reddy said a district-level resource committee had been formed with 20 officials to ensure rehabilitation to child labourers. The District Collector is the chairman of the committee. He said it was an offence to engage children in the age group of 6-14 years, and that employers would be booked, besides levying fine on them. He said in the last three years, the department had rescued more than 3,500 children, registered 220 cases and levied a fine of Rs. 16,400 . (The Hindu 7/10/15)

#### **Kailash Satyarthi will write to all heads of governments (14)**

New Delhi: Nobel peace laureate Kailash Satyarthi said on Wednesday that he will write to the heads of government of all 193 member countries of the United Nations, asking them to ensure adequate financial and human resources for the effective implementation of child-friendly sustainable development goals. "The world has again acknowledged and reaffirmed that sustainable development is not possible without seriously addressing the issues of children. We are going to write to the government leaders of all 193 member countries of the UN to act vis-à-vis prioritising the child-friendly SDGs to ensure adequate financial and human resources for their effective implementation." "We will also reach out to each state in India to implement child-friendly initiatives," said Mr Satyarthi, who shared the Nobel Peace Prize for 2014 with Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai. He added that civil society should come out more strongly in this regard and ensure that these SDGs related to children are accomplished. Last week, the Nobel laureate had addressed the United Nations General Assembly's sustainable development goals (SDGs) summit where he highlighted the need for the governments to put children first and prioritise the child-related SDGs. Talking about the roadmap for facilitating effective implementation of the SDGs, Mr Satyarthi said he plans to involve 100 million youth for the cause. (Asian Age 8/10/15)

#### **Stats show child abuse big in Goa (14)**

PANAJI: Statistics made available by Goa police's victims assistance unit show over 50 child abuse cases are reported in Goa every 2-3 months. Since the unit was set up in April last year, 324 cases of child abuse have been reported (till July). Of these, over 86 are of physical abuse, over 80 of sexual abuse, over 71 kidnapping cases, besides cases of child labour, begging, murder and corporal punishment. In the late 1990s, Goa gained infamy as a paedophile destination after British national Raymond Andrew Varley and late German-national Freddy Albert Peats allegedly molested hundreds of orphaned children at a shelter home. While cases of paedophilia have dropped, physical assault and sexual abuse of kids have risen, said sources. Speaking to STOI, victims assistance unit's coordinator

Emidio Pinho said children today face physical assault in school, at home and even from neighbours. "Parents in Goa are also being booked for child abuse," he said, adding that sexual assault cases include children being raped or molested. The unit's figures also show that female children are more abused than their male counterparts. Pinho said 56% of the victims are female children, 44% are males, and most cases are reported from North Goa. As per the statistics, most child abuse cases are reported from within the jurisdictions of the Mapusa, Panaji and Old Goa police stations. The unit's members follow up on cases till the accused are chargesheeted, said Pinho. Offering an explanation for the statistics, Audrey Pinto of NGO, Scan-India, said child abuse cases appear to be on the rise because these are now being reported. "It is not that child abuse was not happening before. It was, but it was not reported." She added that people are ready to report cases because there is now confidence in justice delivery. Goa state commission for protection of child rights chairperson Sushma Kirtani added that socio-economic conditions, single-parent, alcoholism, and drug addiction are some of the causes for the physical abuse of children. (Times of India 11/10/15)

#### **51 child labourers rescued in Delhi (14)**

New Delhi: A team of Delhi government officials on Tuesday rescued 51 child labourers during raids at factories in the national capital, police said. Police said all the rescued children were aged under 16 and were trafficked to the capital from Bihar and West Bengal. "A team led by a sub-divisional magistrate of south-west Delhi today (Tuesday) raided Delhi's Naraina area near Kalu Sarai and Sagarpur area near Janakpuri, following a complaint by non-governmental organisation Bachpan Bachao Andolan (Save Childhood Movement)," an official statement said. Children aged between 10-16 were involved in industries ranging from electronics (mobile charger manufacture) to toys (doll-making). "All the rescued children are currently housed in Kirbi Place near Delhi cantonment," police said. (Business Standard 13/10/15)

#### **Child abuse case being hushed up: Rights panel (14)**

ALWAR: Bharatpur's district child welfare committee alleged that the social justice department is trying to hush up the case of two children's sexual exploitation in juvenile correction home. The committee's chairperson Alok Sharma said, he, along with tehsildar, had prepared a report on the incident. "We have submitted the report to higher authorities. The report has statements of the victims. Despite that, no action has been taken against the accused in the case," Sharma said. He said victim's statements are sufficient for taking action against the accused. But, no action has been taken yet against the accused in the case. The chairperson said the doctors are also under pressure from the authorities for not showing any evidence of sexual exploitation in their report. Now, the report of FSL (forensic science laboratory) is still awaited. Reportedly, the incident of alleged sexual offence happened one and a half months ago. Bharatpur police on Tuesday had registered a case against eight inmates of a juvenile correction home under various sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) for sexually exploiting their juniors over a period of time. The incident came into light when two 'junior' inmates, who were recently admitted at RBM hospital, revealed their plight to district officials. Of the eight senior inmates, some are convicts while others are accused criminals. They had alleged that the seniors used to force them to take psychotropic substances like 'bhang' and then sexually exploit them, besides coercing them to ask for cash from their families to buy peace with them. However, a day after the case came to light, Hansa Singh Deo, director, department of child rights, visited the juvenile correction home and confirmed that all children had faced violence but she denied the charges of children being sexually exploited. (Times of India 17/10/15)

#### **Clamp down on child porn, demands rights panel (14)**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, which has suo motu initiated proceedings based on a news report about a Facebook page that promoted paedophile activities,

has stated that though child pornography is a serious crime, there is no effective system in place in the State to investigate the crime and book the culprits. The commission, which had issued a notice to the State Hi-tech Crime Enquiry Cell, said that it was told that the cell did not have the power to register crime and conduct investigation, and that since the alleged page was already removed, no further investigation was done. The commission noted that the present procedure of handling issues such as child pornography or any other child-related Internet offences needed to be reviewed urgently. The agency which conducts the full-fledged investigation should be able to receive complaints from the public, especially of child pornography and child-related Web offences as in any other crime investigation, which was not happening now, it said. The commission pointed out that there was no regular or effective mechanism in the State to scan and locate child pornography websites, as is being done by the Special Branch CID of the police and the Police Intelligence wing for content that are against the State or against chief functionaries of the State. It noted that provisions of the Information Technology (Guidelines for Cyber Cafe) Rules, 2011, were yet to be effectively implemented in the State. Accordingly, the commission has recommended that the State Police Chief modify an earlier directive and make it possible for the Cybercrime police station (CCPS) to receive complaints on child pornography and related offences from the public. Local police stations are to immediately forward such complaints to the CCPS for registration of crime and investigation. It also called for undercover cyber patrol operations by the CCPS to identify those engaged in transmitting child pornography. The CCPS was also to constantly scan child pornographic websites and social sites such as Facebook for child pornography content. The commission has also asked the SPC to register a crime and investigate the Facebook page mentioned in the news report and for the SPC and the Additional Chief Secretary (Home) to file an Action Taken Report within 45 days. (The Hindu 19/10/15)

#### **Child rights activists plan stir (14)**

CHENNAI: Child rights activists have proposed to protest in front of the office and residence of the Social Welfare Minister if the Integrated Child Protection Scheme is not implemented. According to them, ever since an agreement was signed with the Centre in 2012, there have been problems. Funds allocated for the programme was not spent properly between 2012 and 2014; and funds have not been received for 2014-15 and 2015-16. Neither has the appraisal board met so far. Though 40 children were identified in each district for sponsorship scheme, lack of funds allocation has prevented conduct of awareness programmes, capacity building and skill enhancement efforts, said A. Narayanan, director of non-governmental organisation Change India. "There is no monitoring of whether the Juvenile Justice Act, POCSO Act and the Right to Education Act were being implemented or if the district child protection unit had conducted awareness programmes about these Acts," he said. Though the mahila courts try sexual crimes against children, they do not order interim relief and compensation in most cases, said K. Shanmugavelayudam of Legal Resource Centre for Child Rights. There is no clarity or guideline on the use of Nirbhaya funds in the State. Nor does the department hire the services of child psychologists, he added. (The Hindu 23/10/15)

#### **Sharp increase in number of child marriages (14)**

MADURAI: Calls to the Madurai Childline, which operates at the helpline number 1098, has revealed that there has been a sharp increase in the number of instances of child marriage being reported during the last four years. Data indicates that while between April 2012 and March 2013, there were only seven calls made to the helpline to report child marriages, this had drastically risen in April 2014 to March 2015 where 51 instances were reported and members of the District Social Welfare Department and Childline intervened. From April 2015 till October, the Childline has already received 57 distress calls of child marriages taking places and have intervened to stop them from happening. "This indicates that over the years, more people have become aware of the redressal measures in place and are using the helpline. More than 80 per cent of the calls we receive about child marriages going to take place are from the

children themselves," said Jim Jesudoss, Director of Childline, Madurai. The district administration has been constantly making people in rural areas aware of the ills of child marriages and addressing them at gram sabha meetings on not to marry off young girls, he added. In a bid to take more awareness to the rural areas, Collector L. Subramanian flagged off a series of awareness programmes which include street theatre, folk music and dance performances based on the theme of prevention of child marriages. Through the five-day programme, the Childline and the district administration, with the support of the District Social Welfare Department, District Child Protection Unit and Department of Social Defense expect to target nine blocks comprising Chellampatti, Usilampatti, Sedapatti, Tirupparankundram, Tirumangalam, Kalligudi, T. Kallupatti, Kottampatti and Melur from where they have recorded the maximum number of complaints of child marriages. (The Hindu 25/10/15)

#### **Castrating child rapists best solution for sex offences, says Madras HC (14)**

CHENNAI: Castration. This is Madras high court's one-word solution for curbing spiralling sex offences against children. "Traditional laws are not stringent enough to yield any desired positive result. Suggestion of castration looks barbaric, but barbaric crimes should definitely attract barbaric model of punishment. Many may not agree with this. Still, everyone needs to understand the stark reality in society and appreciate the punishment suggested," said Justice N Kirubakaran, pointing to the fact that the conviction rate in cases of sex offence against children is a mere 2.4% and that between 2008 and 2014, crimes against children had increased by 400 per cent. "This court is sure that additional punishment of castration of child rapists would fetch magical results in preventing and containing child abuses," said the judge while pointing out that chemical castration had come into force in several countries including the US. The judge was passing orders on a plea from a foreigner facing pedophile charges in TN for quashing the case. Turning down the plea, the judge, however, stayed the red corner notice issued against him making it clear it was being done to facilitate his participation in a criminal trial. ... (Times of India 26/10/15)

#### **Childline rescues 325 children in six months (14)**

MADURAI: Between April and September this year, the Childline had rescued as many as 325 children who were exposed to or exploited under various circumstances, including child marriage and child labour. Disclosing the information at a Childline advisory meeting chaired by Collector L. Subramanian here on Thursday, the officials appealed to the public to utilise Childline number 1098 to put an end to exploitation of children. 'Childline 1098,' established in Madurai in 2002, is engaged in sensitising children, parents and others. Expressing concern over the rise in number of child marriage cases reported over the years, the officials said that they stopped 55 such marriages. Before booking marriage halls, their managers or owners should check the birth certificate of the bride, Dr. Subramanian said and added that forcing children to beg should also be viewed seriously. Childline director P. Premalatha said that since the 24-hour free phone service was available, people must inform the Childline whenever they came across any child in difficult circumstances. It could be a street child or a lost child or runaway child or a child in need of medical assistance. A trained team of volunteers would take care of the victim, she said. Faculty members from Madurai Institute of Social Sciences and Jim Jesudoss of Sakti Vidiyal said that sensitising children in schools had produced good results. The plan to establish clubs to disseminate child rights in schools would go a long way in sensitising the children. Apart from stopping child marriages, the Childline team also intervened on time and prevented five children from being sexually exploited. The teams saved nine children from falling prey to drugs. The most visible menace was begging in major intersections in the city. The police had been told to alert the Childline about begging. "Without harming the children, the parents had to be educated on the harm of begging," the speakers said. The Collector said that apart from Childline volunteers, officials from Social Welfare Department should keep a tab on school dropouts. He said that school dropouts should be given vocational training. Deputy Director (Social Security) S.

Dhanasekarapandian, Social Welfare Officer R. Anandavalli, Assistant Commissioner (Labour) S.P. Santhi and others participated. (The Hindu 30/10/15)

#### **Over 4700 child still missing in Assam (14)**

Guwahati: Over 4700 children are still missing in Assam, who are untraced since 2012, a report said. The recently published report of Assam State Commission for Child Rights revealed that since 2012 to the month of October in 2014, a total of 4754 child are still untraced in the state. The commission said in its report that the child missing incidents have increased in Assam. The child labour rate in Assam is higher than national average. It is a very concern issue. The child labour rate in the state is 4.9pc against the national average 4.5pc, Runumi Gogoi, the chairman of the commission said. The report revealed that the child marriage incidents increased in several districts of the state in past years. The child marriage rate in Barpeta, Kokrajhar, Dhubri district are higher against the national rate, Gogoi said. The state commission and UNICEF had jointly organized a state level seminar of child rights issue in Kaziranga on Saturday. (New Kerala 1/11/15)

#### **Child Labour Act challenged in HC (14)**

GUWAHATI, Nov 2 - The Assam State Commission for Protection of Child Rights and MM Sengar, child rights activist, have challenged in the Gauhati High Court the constitutional validity of the Child Labour Act -1986, highlighting the fact that the said Act is ultra vires on the basis of constitutional provisions, international laws and Supreme Court judgements. The petitioners highlighted in detail the plight of children in Assam as well as in the rest of the country and prayed to the court to direct the Government of India to eliminate the difference in the definition of a child by age as prescribed by the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 and Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 to a conformity of 18 years, as per the commitment to the UN Committee on Rights of the Child. The matter will be heard again on December 11. Advocate Debasmita Ghosh represented the Assam State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, while Sengar represented himself (petitioner in person). Chief Justice (Acting) T Vaiphei and Justice PK Saikia issued notice to the Government of India, asking it to file a reply on the same before December 11. The petitioners had filed the writ petition in public interest under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, challenging the constitutional validity of Section 2(ii), Part II and Part III of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 and calling for upholding the provisions of the Constitution of India for protection of children by eliminating unlawful child labour practices across the country and preventing commercial and other exploitation of children from hazardous and other work, which becomes a hindrance to their comprehensive development and leads to deprivation of primary, secondary and higher education. (The Assam Tribune 3/11/15)

#### **POCSO shocker: Chhattisgarh clocks 2,708 child sexual abuse cases (14)**

RAIPUR: Though Chhattisgarh hugs fourth rung in rogue's gallery on crime against children in 2014 contributing to 4.9% to all-India figure, shocking numbers of incidents have been registered under Protection of Children Against Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) since its inception. On an average, three children are sexually molested everyday in Chhattisgarh. TOI accessed data of incidents registered under POCSO in state from November 2012 to March 2015, according to which 2,708 cases were reported from 27 districts for child molestation. State capital recorded maximum number of 288 cases under POCSO, followed by Durg with 256 cases while 190 incidents were reported in Raigarh district. Among the vulnerable remote districts, Koriya recorded 165 cases, followed by Jashpur district with 157 incidents of child assault. At a place where people hesitate in reporting about such incidents to police, number of incidents recorded is quite high. This indicates that there are a number of cases which still go unreported, a senior police officer said. Incidentally, of 2708 cases registered, accused in only 193 incidents have gone behind the bars while, of 2,377 cases presented before court, 1,732 are still pending and alleged

accused in 452 cases have been acquitted. The situation not only calls for justice through fast-track courts, but creating awareness about newly formed Act among children and parents. Besides, proper training to police officials for imposing appropriate sections of the Act is also essential. CID child cell has been imparting training to police in several districts in collaboration with Delhi-based NGOs, but the need for more is always felt amid ignorance. Talking to TOI, Vikram Srivastava, prominent advocate and founder of Independent Thought in Delhi said, "High number of cases signifies that children and parents are gaining confidence in terms of reporting. It's very important to inform children in schools about protection and its mechanisms like ChildLine number." He added that children in conflict zones at residential schools at both government and non-government institutions are most vulnerable, unaware and ignorant of right and wrong. "Hence, it's very important to implement effective legal mechanisms under juvenile justice Act and ICPS," Vikram said. (Times of India 6/11/15)

#### **Satyarathi calls for new anti-child labour laws (14)**

CUTTACK: Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi on Saturday made a fervent plea to leaders of all political parties to immediately pass the pending Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Bill in Parliament that is seeking a complete ban on all forms of child labour in the country. "Since the only law prevailing in the country on child labour for the last 30 years has become obsolete and ineffective in achieving its desired goal, we need to have a new and good anti-child labour law to abolish all forms of child labour in the country," Mr. Satyarthi said while delivering the first Foundation Day lecture of National Law University here. Amid thunderous applaud from law students, Mr. Satyarthi, who jointly won the Nobel Peace prize last year for his fight against oppression of children across the world, said much of his achievements have come for the support his organisation 'Bachpan Bachao Andolan' received from the courts. "Indian judiciary and legal mechanisms are in safe hands but a lot needs to be done as challenges are plenty," he said urging the law students to work hard to free child labourers in the country. Currently there are over 4.3 million child labourers in India and last year, only 147 cases were filed against their employers that saw an abysmal low conviction rate of only two per cent. He was also equally worried over the huge cases of child sexual abuse allegations pending in different courts. Presided over by University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Srikrishna Deva Rao, the Foundation Day lecture was also addressed by senior judge of Supreme Court Justice Dipak Misra and Orissa High Court Chief Justice D. H. Waghela. Many legal luminaries of the State including judges of the High Court were also present on the occasion. (The Hindu 8/11/15)

#### **Awareness campaign on child rights (14)**

Tirunelveli: To create awareness among the public of the rights of children, campaigns were organised in various parts of the district by National Child Labour Project and Child Line 1098 on Thursday. Since every child has the 'right to live, right to grow, right to protection and right to participation' as per the UN declaration, the NCLP and Child Line 1098 jointly organised the district-wide campaign on Thursday to tell the stakeholders about the rights of the children. Since Child Line 1098 and the NCLP work on rehabilitation of child labourers, these organisations have been entrusted with the task of creating awareness among the public. After Collector M. Karunakaran flagged off the campaign vehicle at the Collectorate, the cultural troupes travelling in the campaign vehicle visited various parts of the district to organise awareness programmes on child rights. (The Hindu 13/11/15)

#### **NGO seeks separate ministry for children (14)**

Hyderabad: CRISP, an NGO working for child rights, has urged the central government to set up a separate ministry for children. The organisation called for de-linking child development from the present women and child development ministry as the rights of women and children are different. Voicing concern over the increasing cases of child abuse, Child Rights and Shared Parenting (CRISP) has sought strict implementation of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012 by creating awareness

among people. The NGO, which has its headquarters in Bengaluru and branches in all the states, wants the government to promote shared parenting in children coming from broken homes so that the children get guidance from both parents. In a statement on Children's Day, the NGO called for declaring parental alienation as a crime. CRISP president Kumar Jagirdar said sex education should be made compulsory at the higher level in all private and government schools. "Focus should be to educate on what constitutes abuse and what steps should be taken to promote boy child safety along with girls," he said. Quoting from a study, it pointed out that boys outnumbered girls in sexual abuse cases among children. (Business Standard 14/11/15)

#### **Child marriages a matter of concern in North Andhra (14)**

VISAKHAPATNAM: Child marriages continue to be a matter of concern in North Andhra, particularly in the rural and interior areas, notwithstanding enactment of several laws. Abject poverty, high incidence of dropout rate, and lack of awareness level are the reasons for many parents preferring to perform marriage of their children. Toll-free helpline Childline (1098) is only restricted to the urban areas. The State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) intervened and stopped child marriages on receipt of information from children clubs in the last two years. Nine cases were reported in Vizianagaram district followed by eight in Visakhapatnam and seven in Srikakulam. Most the marriages are being reported among tribal people, fisherfolk, and Yadavas. North Andhra has about 1,200 children clubs. Through Childline, 49 cases were reported from Vizianagaram in 2014, 128 from Srikakulam, and 29 from Visakhapatnam. During the current calendar year (as on September 30), 65 cases have been reported in Vizianagaram, 70 in Srikakulam, and 32 in Visakhapatnam. SCPCR member S. Balaraju told The Hindu that most of the cases were going unreported due to lack of awareness and slackness on the part of the official machinery. He said that whenever they book a case or receive a complaint through Childline, they immediately direct the officials to offer counselling to the parents, thwart the marriage, and ensure continuity in education of the bride and the groom. "If the marriage is already over, we ask the parents not to allow the couple to stay together. We convince the parents to ensure their education and allow them to stay together only after they become adults," he said. Calling for greater awareness among official on various laws and on how to deal with the issue, Mr. Balaraju said that as per G.O. Ms. No. 13 and Child Marriage Prohibition Act, 2006, Vigilance Committees, comprising 12 members with an active role for Integrated Child Development Scheme officials, should keep a tab on possible negotiations for wedlock during marriage season. Not only the State, the local bodies, and each educational institute should have child protection policy (CPP) with a child-friendly citizens' charter. However, the child-friendly environment has become a casualty, says child rights activist Narava Prakash Rao. According to State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, CPP is a statement of intent that outlines standards, operational guidelines, and proactive measures that ensure safety of children. CPP is a tool that protects both children and staff by clearly defining the roles and responsibilities, importance of accountability, and what action is required in order to keep children safe and ensure consistency of behaviour. (The Hindu 16/11/15)

#### **'Include child rights in education policy' (14)**

CHANDIGARH: From including subjects like human rights to sensitisation of parents, especially in government schools, to needs of children, Chandigarh Commission for Protection of Child Rights has included a number of points in its recommendations regarding the New National Educational Policy-2016. On Tuesday, the commission sent the recommendation to the UT education department and MHRD. "Child rights should be a specific component of human rights and special focus on dignity and rights of girl child. Also workshops for children on "good touch and bad touch" and other current issues should be organized on a continuous basis," the commission stated. It has also recommended a review of the curriculum being taught currently. The commission has also pitched for simpler procedures for admission of children belonging to the marginalized sections. Also, it has recommended that libraries should have adequate number of books on all subjects both for sciences and social sciences and a

separate section for Braille books and audio books. Recruiting specially trained staff (special educators, rehabilitation counselors) to be provided for early identification of children with learning disabilities is another important recommendation as government schools are yet to work on it. It has further stated that there should be greater emphasis on both indoor and outdoor games and adequate equipment to be provided specially in government schools. (Times of India 18/11/15)

#### **Child rights meet focuses on rehab of abused kids (14)**

MUMBAI: Trauma care, skill development and child friendly courtrooms were some of the recommendations and suggestions which experts feel will help in tackling the cause of child labour and trafficking in the country. A state level day long convention was organised in the city on Saturday by the Maharashtra State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (MSCPCR) and the International Justice Mission, a global non government organisation working with victims of violence, sexual exploitation, slavery etc. The state is also looking to provide skill development programmes to assist rehabilitation of rescued children. Speaking at the convention, women and child welfare minister, Pankaja Munde said, "We need to train rescued child labourers in skill development. We are in talks of signing a memorandum of understanding with almost 30 industries by the end of this month. These industries will train children in skill development for three months." Experts stressed on the need for improving facilities to ensure rehabilitation of the rescued children. Sanjay Macwan, field office director, IJM said, "The children should be provided with trauma care which will help in rehabilitating them. The agencies should pass all child-related judgments on time. In addition to this, court rooms should be child-friendly." IJM has also suggested common software which links all agencies working together in the rescue of children to ensure they can be tracked. Commission secretary, A N Tripathi feels while there are plenty of laws in place to fight child labour and trafficking, there is a need for better implementation. "Almost 35% of girls under the age of 16 years are forced in sex trade and this is done on the pretext of bogus or forced marriages. There are various laws which can help curb this but there is a need for a will power to act against it," said Tripathi. The convention was attended by members of the child rights commission from states like Uttar Pradesh and Kerala and also neighbouring Nepal. (Times of India 22/11/15)

#### **HC asks police about details of missing children (14)**

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court has asked the police for details of the number of children reported missing in the past four years and the present status of these cases in order to ascertain how many of them have been recovered. Hearing two writ petitions with regard to two missing minor children, one of whom is yet to be traced, a Division Bench also suggested measures like involvement of beat constables and non-government organisations to find out if such children become victims of human trafficking, flesh trade or begging rackets. The Bench, comprising Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice R.K. Gauba, observed that children being reported missing was a serious issue. It directed the Delhi Police to submit a fresh report including statistics of missing children and those recovered during in the last four years. The Court also asked the police if they had any software to match the description or photos of missing children, with the pictures on the records of other agencies. It suggested that the beat constables and NGOs could be involved in finding out if the children rescued from crime syndicates were those who had gone missing. The Court had earlier directed the Delhi government to prepare a booklet containing all directives on the subject and supply it to all its departments. A booklet was submitted to the Bench during the hearing. (The Hindu 23/11/15)

#### **'Amendment to Child Labour Act leaves issues unaddressed' (14)**

NEW DELHI: More than 5,000 child labourers have been rescued in India in the last five years, says a report prepared by Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA). Of the 5,254 children rescued, one-fifth worked with their families or were part of a family-run trade. If the latest amendment to the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, is approved, children will be allowed to work in family enterprises and in the

TV and Entertainment industry, except circus, the report prepared by the BBA said. "The Union Cabinet of the Government of India has given its approval for moving statutory amendments to the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. While there are some important provisions outlined in the proposed Bill, there are some lacunae that left unaddressed leave scope for defeating the entire purpose of the Bill," said Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi who founded Bachpan Bachao Andolan. "The Bill proposes to allow children to work in family enterprises. Also, the list of prohibited occupations set forth in the schedule have been reduced to just three, including mines, inflammable substances and explosives. Earlier, the Child Labour law prohibited employment of a child in 18 occupations and 65 processes," Mr. Satyarthi added. These amendments would mean that children will be allowed to work in family-run industries like carpets, embroidery, agriculture and other forms of domestic labour. "We were able to rescue a large number of children in the last five years. When we analysed their profile we found out that 80 per cent of them would not have been rescued if the proposed amendment had already been in place as most of the children are employed in family-run trade," said Mr. Satyarthi. In order to bring a consensus against the proposed Bill, Bachpan Bachao Andolan held a meeting with the various stakeholders of child rights and put forth its recommendations, which will be submitted to the government soon. Mr. Satyarthi added that once the recommendations are finalised, he will write to the Prime Minister and Members of Parliament to create awareness about the amendment. (The Hindu 24/11/15)

#### **1,290 child labourers rescued in Raichur this year (14)**

RAICHUR: The Raichur district administration has rescued 1,290 child labourers, particularly those who were employed in cotton fields, from different parts of the district this year. A total of 260 vehicles used for transporting child labourers were seized and a fine of Rs. 15,93,885 has been collected from the vehicle owners as per the Transport Act. Addressing the media at his office here on Wednesday, Deputy Commissioner S. Sasikanth Senthil claimed that Raichur was the first district in the State to invoke Section 370 of the Indian Penal Code (human trafficking) against the employers of child labourers. He said cases were booked against 29 employers under the section, of whom 19 were still in judicial custody as their bails were rejected. "We are determined to eradicate the evil of child labour from the district. Even the courts have sent a clear message to society by denying bail to many of the accused. I appeal to civil society and media to join hands with the administration in its effort to end child labour," he said. Taking into account the fact that child labourers were mainly employed in cotton fields during harvesting, Mr. Senthil warned that the administration would hold the land owners responsible and implicate them under Section 370 of the IPC, under which offenders could be imprisoned for up to 10 years. "We will hold land owners, even if they have leased out their lands to others, responsible for employing child labourers. Apart from booking offenders under relevant sections of the IPC and other laws, we will also take bonds from repeated offenders. It will also be mentioned in their pahanis (RTCs)," he said. He commended the remarkable role being played by the police department in curbing child labour practices. Superintendent of Police Chetan Singh Rathor, District Labour Officer Arati, Child Labour Project Manjunath Reddy and others were present. (The Hindu 26/11/15)

#### **30 minor children rescued from illegal hostel in Kandhamal (14)**

BERHAMPUR: Thirty minor children were rescued from an illegal private children's home at Baliguda in Kandhamal district. This hostel for poor tribal and Dalit children was raided by the police along with activists of Childline. District Child Protection Officer (DCPO) Rashmita Karan and members of district Child Protection Committee participated in the raid. Rescued children have been sheltered at Banabasi Seva Samity at Baliguda. Most of them were from remote villages of Kandhamal district, while some of them were from adjoining Gajapati district. According to officials, their parents were being contacted so that they could be properly rehabilitated. All the rescued children were studying in Classes I to X. The hostel management had promised better education and life for these children. It is alleged that money

was also being collected from parents. The hostel was not registered despite directives of the administration. It did not have proper infrastructure to house the children. According to the rescued children, as there was no toilet facility in the building they were staying in and they had to go out in the fields. They added that they were also involved in labour at their hostel, including cooking work and gathering firewood from nearby jungle for their kitchen. (The Hindu 2/12/15)

#### **Every child kept out of school works as a bonded labour: Swami Agnivesh (14)**

"Every child who is kept out of school in India is a bonded child labour. More than 60% of the contribution to India's GDP comes from daily wage labourers and 450 million of India's unorganised labour is not getting minimum wage salary, making India the largest home to modern day slaves and child labourers," said Swami Agnivesh speaking to TOI during his visit to Bengaluru on Wednesday. Speaking on the sidelines of Teach for change, an NGO with an objective to improve the overall literacy at government high schools in Karnataka, Agnivesh said, "Every child who is kept away from school can be called a bonded slave because if not in schools then where are these children spending their entire day? Children do not drop out from the government schools; they are pushed out of these schools because the government is working against them". Children from backward castes and background have no right to education in our nation. Government schools are in shambles because of the governance, he adds. "The government was supposed to allocate 6% of the national budget to education but only half of it is used today. The government teachers are taking money from the government only to send their kids to private schools. All states should follow Allahabad High court's order of ensuring that all government servants send their children to primary schools run by the state education board," said Agnivesh. When asked about the current education schemes introduced by Union minister Smriti Irani, the human right activist replied, "All these schemes from mid-day meals to RTE are scams and Smriti Irani does not have the will to make radical change in the education system of India. We have more religious places than schools in India, religious places where false gods are worshipped and children are found begging." (Times of India 2/12/15)

#### **More than 180,000 child brides in Turkey, lawyer claims (14)**

There are more than 180,000 child brides in Turkey, a female-rights lawyer has claimed. Around third of all marriages in the country are between an elder man and a child, according to statistics from a Turkey Population and Health Research survey. And lawyer Nuriye Kadan, an executive member of the Izmir Bar Association Central, said: "There are 181,036 child brides in our country, unfortunately." In 2002, the legal age of marriage for girls was raised to 17 years old, although the civil code allows for marriage at the age of 16, with the consent of the court in "exceptional circumstances". Speaking at a conference to address the issue on Sunday, Ms Kadan said: "Nearly 20,000 parents filed applications to marry off their under-16 girls in 2012." Child marriage in Turkey has been a longstanding problem, but reliable statistics around the issue are scarce. Research conducted by the United Nations Population Fund in 2013 indicated 28 per cent of marriage in Turkey involved girls aged under 18. A huge influx of refugees - often women and children - from Syria and Iraq is thought to have pushed numbers up. Parents are faced with the decision to either marry their daughters to strangers or attempt to protect them from the volatile conditions in refugee camps. While President Recep Erdogan has called the state of women's affairs the "bleeding wound" of his country, he also said men and women cannot be placed on an "equal footing". Globally, around 15 million girls are married as children. A total of 90 per cent of adolescent pregnancies occur within marriage, and are the leading cause of death in girls aged 15 to 19 in low to middle-income countries. (Times of India 9/12/15)

#### **Metro stations hosting child rights exhibition (14)**

New Delhi: Twelve Delhi Metro stations are hosting 'Click Rights', a photojournalism exhibition highlighting the health and nutrition challenges faced by children below the age of five in the country. The

photo exhibition is part of the 'Get Healthy, Give Healthy' campaign launched by Child Rights and You (CRY), a non-governmental organisation, seeking to make people aware about the issues confronting children. "The campaign focuses on children under 5 years of age and their health, education and nutrition. Growth and development is at its peak in this age-group and proper nutrition, health and a safe and stimulating environment lay the foundations for later development," said Soha Moitra, the Regional Director, North, CRY. She said 56 percent of children from 12 to 23 months were not immunized and 48.4 percent were malnourished. "Almost one million children every year do not live to see their first birthday. Therefore through 'Click Rights' we aim to reach out to people and convey that every child needs a healthy start and that opportunities lost in this phase cannot be reversed". A large number of the photographs were contributed by children from CRY intervention areas, with training from photography volunteers. Anuj Dayal, Executive Director Corporate Communications, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, said, "The Delhi Metro is pleased to associate itself with the 'Click Rights' initiative." "Children are the future of the nation... We are sure that through this campaign we will be able to benefit many children and provide them with the ideal platform to shine in their lives," he added. The photo exhibition will run up to December 31 across 12 stations, including Shahdara, Kashmere Gate, Vishwavidyalaya, Chandni Chowk, Chawri Bazar, New Delhi, Rajiv Chowk, Uttam Nagar East, Janakpuri West, Anand Vihar ISBT, Mandi House and ITO. (Business Standard 10/12/15)

#### **More number of child labourers turning into rag-pickers: survey (14)**

A survey conducted by children under the aegis of non-profit organisation CHETNA (Childhood Enhancement through Training and Action) found out that the number of child labourers, specially in and around the railway stations in the Capital has gone up from 224 last year to 482 this year. Out of the total number of child labourers, majority is that of rag-pickers. The survey found that 155 children are employed as rag-pickers while others are engaged in odd jobs like working at a restaurant, selling balloons and others. The one of its kind survey was conducted by children who were once living on the street and were rehabilitated by CHETNA, was done with the aim of making the government aware about their problems so that positive measures can be taken. "Members of Badhte Kadam, a wing of CHETNA did something which seemed impossible for our government. We have conducted this survey to let the government know about the problems of street children. Because of the government's inability to get a headcount of the children, they remain a neglected lot when it comes to implementation of facilities for them," said Poonam one of the surveyors. The surveyors conducted a survey around railway stations, which is the hub of trafficking of children and has a large population of children working in shops, as rag-pickers, or at restaurants. They also expressed an apprehension that Sarai Kale Khan could be the hub of trafficking. "We also found out that the majority of children come from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, followed by States like Haryana, Assam, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Manipur and West Bengal," added another surveyor Shambhu. CHETNA is now planning to take the findings of the survey to organisations including National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) to put pressure on the government for designing an action plan for street working children. "Street and working children have done an amazing work by conducting the consensus of working children. I think now is the time to include our street and working children in the consensus and this issue will also be considered in the United Nations," said Sanjay Gupta, Director CHETNA. (The Hindu 11/12/15)

#### **46 Child Workers Rescued From Bangle Units in Old City (14)**

HYDERABAD: Despite the efforts of the police and social welfare departments, child labour thrives in the bylanes of the city. Though the police and child welfare officials launched a massive drive against child labour earlier this year, hundreds of teenagers are made to toil in the dark rooms of bangle units dotting the winding lanes of the Old City, without proper food and sleep for meagre wages. The Hyderabad police on Tuesday rescued as many as 46 minors from the bangle units in the old city. The sleuths came across minors hailing from states like Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal. Cases have been registered against

Abdul Waheed(43), Parveez(23), Dhanesh(21), Rajan(65) and Tanveer(20), the owners of the bangle manufacturing units. Deputy commissioner of Police V Satyanarayana said that minors were found working in four bangle units under the limits of Chatrinaka and Falaknuma police stations. Among them, 12 children have been brought to the city from Purnia district in Bihar. Eight children from Jharkhand and two from Kolkata were among the rescued. "The children were made to work in surroundings unsafe for human beings. All the 46 children will be sent to the rescue home of Child Welfare department and united with their parents. Earlier, as many as 385 children were rescued from the units working under limits of Bhavani Nagar, Chandrayangutta, Kanchanbagh, Falaknuma, Charminar, Mirchowk, and Moghalpura etc between January and April 2015. As many as 31 cases were registered against the employers. As many as 63 persons were arrested in connection with the cases, said the DCP. According to him, those who were involved in child labour earlier have not returned. "People who escaped the attention of Police earlier have brought these minors recently on a trial basis by concealing their identity at the units," said the DCP. (New Indian Express 16/12/15)

### **87% dip in child rights violation cases in Maharashtra in 5 years (14)**

Mumbai: Even though incidents of crimes against children are being reported frequently, the number of complaints on the violation of child rights filed in the Maharashtra State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (MSCPCR) has dropped by more than 87% in the last five years. The number of fresh complaints filed in the child rights commission has dropped to 61 in 2015 from as many as 498 in 2011, revealed the statistics released by the commission recently. The commission was established in 2008-09 but it started getting more cases from 2011 onwards, with the introduction of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009. In 2008-09, it had received only nine cases and the number increased slightly to 35 in 2010. The commission deals with cases which involve violation of child rights such as child sexual abuse, corporal punishment, child labour and trafficking among others. Interestingly, with the fall in number of complaints, the number of pending cases with the commission has also reduced, with the commission having zero pending cases to be looked at right now. This has happened for the first time since its inception. The number of pending cases has dropped from 575 in 2011 to just 80 in 2015. Out of these 80, 15 cases are currently being heard, while reports have been called for 38 cases and the remaining 28 cases have been closed for order. This means that there are zero complaints that have not been addressed by the commission. Member secretary of the commission, AN Tripathi attributed the trend to increased awareness on child rights and swift disposal of cases by the commission. "Awareness on child rights has increased recently because of strict penalties or punishments under the new acts such as the RTE act, Juvenile Justice Act and the (POCSOA) Act," said Tripathi. However, child rights experts said that besides more awareness, number of cases coming to the commission might have also reduced because of other factors such as less reach in other parts of the state. "Since the commission is based out of Mumbai, people from remote parts of the state find it difficult to approach them," said Farida Lambay, co-founder, Pratham NGO. "It is true that awareness has increased, but it is also important to see what type of cases are now coming to the commission." Also the commission has been conducting regular hearings of the cases that are filed with them. "We are short staffed but still we are trying to ensure that we come up with recommendations as soon as possible," said Tripathi. "We are the only child rights commission in the country to have achieved this." In the past, the commission's recommendations on allowing autistic children to study in the same class as regular children by assigning a shadow teacher and suggestions to ban children under 18 years from participating in dahi handi have been upheld by the Bombay High Court. (Hindustan Times 17.12.15)

### **76% kids below age 13 hooked to YouTube: Assocham (14)**

MUMBAI: A whopping 95% of the teens, aged between 13 and 17 years, access the internet while 76% of minors, below the age of 13, use YouTube daily, a new survey revealed. One is required to be of above 18 years of age to open an account on YouTube, the video-sharing website. Social media networking

sites are used by 81% of the teenagers while 72% of them log into social media more than once daily, the survey by Assocham said. Of these, 65% of the kids aged below 13 used social media sites and 76% of the children below 13 have a YouTube account, and 51% of them also have a smartphone. Over one-third -- 35% -- of the teenagers use laptops and 32% use tablets to access their favourite websites, said Assocham secretary-general DS Rawat. "The statistics are sad and worrying. YouTube requires account holders to be 18, but even a five-year-old can easily sign up with parents' permission. Despite these clearly stated and published age restrictions, large and growing numbers of children between the age of 7 to 13 are using social media networks and access YouTube assistance without their parents' knowledge and consent," Rawat said. The survey by Assocham's Social Development Foundation (ASDF) of 4,750 parents of children in the age group of 6-13 was conducted in various Indian cities. YouTube is accessed daily by 76% of those below 13 with music video clips being the most popular, and 40-50% below the age of nine are also active on other sites. In the survey, Lucknow ranked first on the YouTube chart followed by Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, Coimbatore, Chandigarh and Dehradun.... (Times of India 21/12/15)

#### **Demand in Rajya Sabha for immediate passage of juvenile bill (14)**

NEW DELHI: A demand for expeditious passage of the amendments to the Juvenile Justice Act to allow children between 16-18 years to be tried as adults in heinous crime cases was made in the Rajya Sabha today, soon after the Supreme Court dismissed a plea against the release of the juvenile offender in the December 16 gang-rape case. As memories of the brutal 2012 Nirbhaya case returned with the release of the juvenile, Derek O'Brien (TMC) said he has given a notice under rule 267 seeking suspension of business and taking up the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2014. He said the House had only three days to go before end of the Winter Session and government's listed agenda includes commercial courts, arbitration and real estate bill. The government has not even listed the juvenile bill for discussion and passing today, he said during Zero Hour. "It is incumbent upon the House to listen to what is going on outside," he said, asking the House to rise above politics. "It is not a perfect bill but let us list it and pass the bill," O'Brien said. Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said the bill was listed on December 8, 10 and 11. "We have listed it for tomorrow," he said, adding if all agree the bill can be taken up for discussion today itself. Deputy chairman PJ Kurien said O'Brien has raised a relevant point. If the government and opposition agree the bill can be discussed. "But government has to list the bill." Leader of the Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad said the bill is not listed today even though the Congress had at all-party meeting last week agreed to its passage. Today, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Bill, 2015 has been listed for passing. "We are committed to passing it today," he said adding the juvenile bill can be taken up tomorrow. (Times of India 21/12/15)

#### **Suja Jones seeks intervention of child rights commission (14)**

Bengaluru: Suja Jones Mazurier, mother of the seven-year-old who allegedly faced sexual abuse at the hands of her father Pascal Mazurier, has sought the intervention of the Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights in the case. A High Court order on December 18 had given Pascal Mazurier visitation rights to all their three children, including their daughter, the alleged victim. Though she said that she would appeal against the order in the Supreme Court, she did not do so. Sources close to her said she was trying to mobilise resources and find an advocate who would take up the case pro bono. In a letter to Kripa Alva, chairperson, Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, a copy of which is available with The Hindu, Suja Jones wrote: "My daughter is traumatised and I am shocked that this could happen. I do not know what step to take. I need the immediate intervention of the Commission since I do not have much time." Kripa Alva said, "We are looking into the matter and trying to explore how we can help them. But the court order came late and with court holidays having begun, we will see what best we can do in the coming days." Throughout the day, Suja Jones Mazurier remained inaccessible to

the media. Several child rights activists and groups, including South India Cell for Human Rights Education and Monitoring (SICHREM) and Swaraj Abhiyan, held a press conference on Wednesday supporting Suja Jones. They said that the child was an important witness in the case and such a meeting may intimidate her. (The Hindu 25/12/15)

#### **Flow of child labour from Bihar on the rise (14)**

VISAKHAPATNAM: The case of the 12-year-old girl, who was rescued by the Malkapuram police and the Childline from the house of a sailor of the Indian Navy, appears to be a typical instance of bonded child labour. Even after over six decades of Independence, bonded child labour still seems to exist. Bihar is said to be the main supplier. The rescued girl too hails from a village in . Ravi Kiran of the Childline and Ranganadham, SHO of Malkapuram Police Station, said that the girl was brought from Bihar two months ago as a domestic help and was not being paid for her services. Initial investigations suggest that the couple paid some amount to the girl's parents. The girl was mercilessly beaten allegedly by the sailor's wife, Anjali, a number of times. The girl was produced before the Child Welfare Committee on Saturday and sent to a shelter home after treatment. A case was registered against Anjali under IPC Section 324. But this is just one among the many incidents of child labour and abuse that have come to light in the recent times. Between March 2014 and April 2015, the Childline rescued 55 child labourers, 10 of them girls, from hazardous profession and domestic sector. Of them, 32 children were from various districts of Bihar. Of the total rescued children, 53 were picked up from brick kilns, motor mechanic shops, welding shops, construction sites, and bars and restaurants, and two from the domestic sector. "The flow of children from Bihar is on the rise. In this year, we have rescued 12 children from various hazardous sites and seven of them are from Bihar," said Deputy Commissioner of Labour, R. Srinivas. "We do not have problem with the other sectors. But domestic sector is a bit problematic," said Mr. Srinivas. Acquiescing with the Deputy Commissioner of Labour, Mr. Ravi Kiran said that there were a number of children employed as domestic help and they were being subjected to torture. "But we cannot conduct a raid without prior concrete information," he said. (The Hindu 27/12/15)

#### **115 children facing legal trials across district (14)**

KOLHAPUR: As many as 115 children are facing legal trials at the juvenile justice board (JJB) in Kolhapur for their alleged involvement in various crimes. There are couple of cases, such as molestation, which can be considered heinous crime against women, while the rest are related to theft, robbery and street-fighting. Officials said the number of over 100 cases is a steady trend and there is no sharp increase or decrease. Kolhapur and Ichalkaranji are the two major urban areas from where the children were taken into custody by the police and later the JJB's probation and observation centres, sources in the judiciary said. The JJB Kolhapur has a magistrate and two members. It has been known as one with the least pendency in Maharashtra. The JJB conducts two sittings every week -- on Fridays and Saturdays -- to sort out the cases. However, the police can take the child to the magistrate any time of the week in case of emergency, officials said. As per the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 (56 of 2000), rule 5, a child apprehended by police, shall be placed under the charge of the special juvenile police unit, or the designated police officer. The rule states that the juvenile shall be brought by the concerned police officer to the JJB within 24 hours of taking charge of him or her. The details of not doing so be recorded in the police diary or general diary. "The police strictly follow the norms. The JJB at Kolhapur has remained punctual to sort out the pendency of cases. Still there 115 cases pending. Our key task is to provide necessary counselling to the child in conflict with law. I have seen cases when names of children were got registered in police book as per the complaint against an whole family. In such cases, we have to ensure that the future of the child is not ruined," said Rajashree Sakle, member of the JBB Kolhapur. Though the district has five such centres, in almost all cases the child is sent to the city-based centre. "We conduct inquiry of the child's behaviour using our probation officers. We send them to the centres only if the report consists of some negative remarks; however, at

the centre also we ensure that the child receives counselling from our officers," Sakle added. The NGOs working in the field of child rehabilitation, while opposing the new law reducing the juvenile age from 18 to 16, say that the probation and observation centres are more responsible to convert a child into hardened criminal. "We have JJBs at all the districts in Maharashtra; but there are very few places where the child in conflict with law can get proper counselling. At other places, the child is often exposed to a hardliner partner and there is chance that the child starts following him or her. There is no scientific therapy of counselling is available in any of our centres," said Anuradha Bhosale, an activist, working for child-rights. (Times of India 29/12/15)