

Launching of state campaign for Rape free India

Rape, A National Emergency- CALL FOR ATTENTION! Viewed by speakers in a public dialogue

India is a country, where four children are sexually abused every hour, two children are raped every hour, a child is sold for sexual exploitation every two minutes, four women are raped every hour, about 99% of sexual violence go unreported,

the pendency rate of POCSO cases at the level of courts is 89% in 2016, which means it will take years to dispose these cases. More than 30% of all elected representatives have a criminal record including those accused of crime against children and women. Woman and girls, starting from 8 months to 80 years are not safe in this country. According to the government data, crimes against children in Odisha have shown a huge increase by 686% in the last five years (2012-16). This increase could be accredited to rise in awareness among people on laws related to children. The registration of crimes against children in Odisha increased by 28% during 2015- 2016. Despite strong legislation, our children and women are living with fear. The absence of political will, lack of accountability and collective social responsibility to combat rape is dismal. Through the power that we hold in our vote, we must demand that those who seek our vote must commit to create a New India, to make a Rape Free India - *a Rape Mukht Bharat viewed by speakers in a Public Dialogue .*

People's Cultural Centre PECUC and Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation, set up by Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi launched the campaign on 8th April 2019 at Jayadev Bhawan, Bhubaneswar with a Public Dialogue to make India Rape Free. The campaign was launched in response to the increasing cases of Rape of our Children and Women and the missing discourse of the issue in this election campaign. It has been increasingly felt that there is a growing need to bring the issue to the forefront. It is marked by public dialogues in state capitals, key constituencies and pledge drive with candidates in 500 Lok Sabha constituencies from different political parties and independent candidates. PECUC has taken the responsibility to coordinate the campaign in the state of Odisha.

The Public Dialogue was attended by political party representative, spokesperson from different political parties, women's group, youth, academicians, Media personnel and others.

"Sexual abuse of women and children including rape is a national problem. It is imperative that the issue should be the top priority for the political class of the country" said Rakesh Senger, Director, Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation. He further stressed manifestoes of political parties should also include the issues of women and children safety on priority basis.

The campaign will be reaching out to candidates in 21 parliamentary constituency of Odisha, making voters aware of their right to vote and need to come out to vote for the safety of our children and women. "We demand that this election, issue of women and children safety should be at the forefront. Any person accused of rape should not be allowed to fight elections in this country" said Ranjan Mohanty, Secretary PECUC and Chairperson of National Action & Coordination Group for Ending Violence against children. He also provided certain fact that 106 rapes are in happening in India everyday. In 2016 victims in 94.6% cases were known to the accused in India. But in Odisha situation was little different in 72% cases this crimes were committed by unknown persons. And the conviction rate is also very low in Odisha i.e. 6%, second lowest in the country. The campaign demands a budgeted National Action Plan to make a Rape Free India and 10% allocation for child protection in the Union Budget. The participants in the meeting also demanded that any person accused of a sex crime must be suspended forthwith from the political party pending investigation.

Public Dialogue with Political Parties' representatives was carried out. Political Party spoke persons Lelin Mohanty and Sulata Deo of BJD, Chiltralekha Mohanty of BJP, Sonali Sahoo of INC, Sauribandhu Kar of CPI, Suresh Panigrahi of CPI (M) joined in this public dialogue. The Political Party spoke persons signed the pledge card and promised that their party will work towards making a Rape free India. They all stressed that effort & pledge of political party will not be enough for this purpose, it requires joint efforts by all concern citizen .

Dr. Sahadeva Sahoo, (IAS) Rtd, Former Chief Secretary of Govt. of Odisha ,Dr. Seva Mohapatra, Former Director of Health and Family Welfare Dept, Prof Dr, Minakshi Panda, Director PECUC chaired different sessions & Anuradha Mohanty, Executive Director, PECUC gave the welcome address. Amongst others Prof Adaramani Baral, chairman, PECUC, Ruby Rout, Gender Expert, Mr. Baikuntha Nath Panigrahi, Former Director Doordarshan Kendra, Anuradha Biswal, Olympian shared their views. Ipsita Mishra recited a poem and Jyotirmayee Nayak sang a song. More than 350 participants including NGOs from 21 constituencies, NSS Volunteers of Utkal University, Women Group members, PRI functionaries, Media representatives participated. As a follow up candidates for Lok Sabha & Assembly Elections shall be approached to sign the pledge card and commit to work towards a Rape Free India.