

COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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Human trafficking is the intentional forcing of another into slavery - Asa Don Brown

Human trafficking is the third largest organized crime after drugs and arms trade across the globe. It is an activity which leads to recruitment, transportation or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force or a position of vulnerability. In recent times, West Bengal has recorded the largest integer in women and child trade cases in the region. According to the Union Government's data on human trafficking in India presented in the Rajya Sabha in 2017, Bengal is the foremost in the list of states where human trafficking is most rampant. Moreover, the state has seen around 70 percent increase in the number of women and children trafficked in the last few years. As we all know that West Bengal, specifically Siliguri, shares national and international borders; human trafficking and cases of persons going missing have become a potent threat in this section of the country.

The information compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) states that at any given moment multiple cases of trafficking in person are registered in West Bengal; even from several parts of North Bengal region. The data exposed that around 3,855 women and children had been trafficked from several parts of Bengal in 2015-16 and the aggregate increased by 44 percent in 2017-18. These people are exploited for the purpose of commercial, sexual and forced labour. The Panitanki Kakarvitta border crossing, close to Bagdogra airport, is the preferred exit from India to Nepal.

Many NGOs are diligently working to combat Human Trafficking. As responsible citizens of our country, it is our utmost duty to join hands with



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these people who are leaving no stone unturned to stop human trafficking. Siliguri and its surrounding areas are gravely affected by this bane. The Kanchanjungha Uddhar Kendra and Shakti Vahini Siliguri Centre are two leading NGOs working against trafficking. The main reasons which facilitate this social evil are poverty, lack of awareness and lack

of education. There should be an augmentation in government-sponsored awareness programmes in the village areas where the percentage of trafficking is poignant. Only then can we check the expanse of trafficking.

As residents of Siliguri, people should take the pledge to not be silent or oblivious spectators to this heinous crime anymore. Along with

the common people, the policy makers should also address this issue of mounting seriousness.

The ordinary people should know that the Government of India penalises trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation through the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act (ITPA) which prescribes penalty of seven years to life time imprisonment. India also prohibits bonded and forced labour through the Bonded Labour Abolition Act, the Child Labour Act and the Juvenile Justice Act.

Furthermore, it is also our moral and social duty to come forward and ensure that the survivors are rehabilitated and not subjected to societal stigma and ostracism.

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