

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1272
TO BE ANSWERED ON 13.12.2023

GIRLS TRAFFICKING FROM MAHARASHTRA TO NEIGHBOURING STATES

1272: DR. FAUZIA KHAN:

Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has data on all the minor girls traded and forcefully married across Maharashtra state borders in the last five years with the status of the kidnappers' trials;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) if not, the reasons therefor;
- (d) whether Government has any plan to establish women and child safety checkpoints at the state borders and initiatives to track down rackets to control the recent rising number especially against caste and religion based violence in cases of child brides and human trafficking;
- (e) if so, the details thereof; and
- (f) if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI SMRITI ZUBIN IRANI)

(a) to (f): 'Police' and 'Public Order' are 'State' subjects, and it is the primary duty and responsibility of the State Governments to prevent, detect, register and investigate crimes, including trafficking in persons, and prosecute the criminals. However, the Government of India attaches highest importance to the matter of preventing and countering the crime of human trafficking and supplements the efforts of State Governments by way of providing them financial assistance to establish and strengthen the infrastructure in combating human trafficking at various levels in the State; as well as by providing them regular guidance and advice through various advisories, guidelines and SOPs issued from time to time.

Taking cognizance of the need for effective handling of matters having inter-state, national and international ramifications, the Government of India enacted the National Investigation Agency Act in 2008, which provided for constituting a special agency to be called the National Investigation Agency for investigation and prosecution of offences under the Act as specified in its Schedule. The schedule to the Act specifies a list of offences which are to be investigated and prosecuted by the NIA. The National Investigation Agency Act was further amended and notified on 25th July 2019. One of the significant amendments inter-alia included amendment of the 'Schedule' to the NIA Act, whereby NIA has been authorised to investigate the offence of human trafficking by bringing Sections 370 and 370A of Chapter XVI of the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860) in its ambit.

The officers of NIA have the powers, duties, privileges and liabilities, which police officers have in connection with the investigation of offences committed therein throughout India in relation to the investigation of Scheduled Offences, including human trafficking, and arrest of persons concerned in such offences.

In addition to the authorization of NIA to intervene and investigate matters of human trafficking, some of the other key initiatives taken by Government in preventing and countering human trafficking are indicated below:

- i. For strengthening the law enforcement response against trafficking in persons, the Ministry of Home Affairs has given financial assistance to State Governments from time to time for setting up Anti Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) in Police Districts. This has supplemented the efforts of States and Union Territories, who have also established AHTUs on their own. AHTUs are integrated task forces to prevent and combat trafficking in persons and comprise of a group of trained sensitive officials of Police, Women and Child Welfare Department and other relevant Departments of the State. AHTUs function as coherent units to prevent and combat trafficking. The objectives and responsibilities of AHTUs include, taking up the crusade against all criminal aspects of the crime of human trafficking; ensuring focused attention in dealing with offences of human trafficking; conducting rescue operations whenever they receive information about trafficking activities either from police sources, NGOs or civil society; ensuring a victim-centric approach; functioning as the grass root unit for collection and development of an exhaustive database on all law enforcement aspects of the crime, including information on traffickers and trafficking gangs etc. While the Central Government has provided financial assistance for setting up physical infrastructure in these Units, it is the responsibility of States to depute suitable manpower to manage these Units.

- ii. The Central Government provides regular guidance and advice to States and UTs through various advisories issued from time to time on measures to be adopted for handling human trafficking related issues.
- iii. The Central Government engages with the States and UTs to generate awareness about human trafficking. Financial assistance is provided by MHA to all State Governments and UT Administrations on regular basis to hold Judicial Colloquiums on Human Trafficking. This aims at sensitizing the judicial officers to focus on procedures for speedy disposal of trafficking cases and taking stringent action against traffickers and exercise discretion as provided under the law.
- iv. Financial assistance is also provided to all States and UTs on regular basis to hold State Level Conference on Human Training on a regular basis to sensitize and bring awareness among the various law enforcement agencies and other stakeholder Departments of the States in the matter of trafficking.
- v. An Advisory dated 06.07.2020 and 23.10.2020 was issued to all States and UTs recently by MHA and Ministry of Women and Child Development for preventing and combating human trafficking, especially during the period of COVID-19 pandemic.
- vi. Training is provided to State Police Personnel in prevention and investigation of human trafficking in partnership with Bureau of Police Research and Development, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (Regional Office of South Asia) and Border Guarding Forces such as Border Security Force and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB). These training programmes aim at capacity building of law enforcement agencies and generating awareness among them.
- vii. An institutional mechanism to counter human trafficking at State Government level has also been shared by the Government of India on 01.12.2020 with all States and UTs for adoption. The State Governments have been asked to establish appropriate Units at State Headquarter level, District level and Police Station level, which will be useful in countering human trafficking in an effective and efficient manner at all levels.

Further, a national level communication platform - Crime Multi Agency Centre (Cri-MAC) was launched by MHA on March 12, 2020. Cri-MAC facilitates dissemination of information about significant crimes including human trafficking cases across the country on real time basis and enables inter-State coordination. Cri-MAC has been established for online sharing of information on crime & criminals on 24x7 basis between various Law Enforcement Agencies and ensure seamless flow of information between them. Cri-MAC intends to improve the digital communication between disjointed units as this will lead to better and faster coordination.
