



# Moving ahead for Child Labour Free India- Initiatives taken along with ratification of ILO Conventions on Child Labour

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The Minister of State for Labour and Employment (Independent Charge), Shri Bandaru Dattatreya briefed the press about the initiatives taken for Child Labour free India along with ratification of ILO Conventions on Child Labour in a press conference held in New Delhi, today. Shri Dattatreya informed that India ratified International Labour Organization's Convention No 138 (minimum age for employment) and Convention No 182 (worst forms of child labour) to symbolise its commitment and initiatives for eradication of child labour and attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 related with curbing of child labour. The ratification of both conventions coincided with the World Day against Child Labour expressing India's commitment along with global partners to fight the menace of child labour and providing the childhood back to them. Shri Bandaru Dattatreya handed the Instruments of Ratification to Mr. Guy Ryder, DG, ILO at the sideline event held in Geneva at the International Labour Conference, 2017 on 13th June 2017.

With ratification of these two core ILO conventions, India has ratified 6 out of 8 core ILO conventions, with the other 4 core ILO conventions relating to abolition of forced labour, equal remuneration and no discrimination between men and women in employment and occupation, thus reaffirming its commitment for promoting and realizing fundamental principles and right at work. This action is in sync with the Government's broader intent for social equality and growth for all.

Ratification of these 2 core conventions by India has not only national but international ramifications for eradication of child labour as it means that almost all children (99%) in the world are covered by Convention 182, while coverage of Convention 138 enhanced from approximately 60 percent to almost 80% of the world's children population. India is the 170th ILO Member State to ratify Convention No 138, which requires States to set a minimum age under which no one shall be admitted to employment or work in any occupation, except for light work and artistic performances. Similarly, for Convention No 182, India is the 181st member state to ratify and reaffirm its commitment for the prohibition and elimination of worst forms of child labour, including slavery, forced labour and trafficking; the use of children in armed conflict; use of children for prostitution, pornography and in illicit activities ( such as drug trafficking); and hazardous work.

Government of India has initiated various measures and realization of a multipronged strategy on ground to move firmly towards a child labour free society. A landmark step in the endeavour to have a child labour free society was the enactment of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Prevention) amendment Act, 2016 in August 2016 that provides for complete prohibition on employment of children below 14 years in all occupations and processes and prohibits employment of adolescents (14-18 years) in hazardous occupations and processes. The age of admission to employment has been linked to the age of compulsory education under Right to Education Act (RTE), 2009.

In order to facilitate compliance of the provisions of the Act, Government of India has also notified the amendment in the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Central Rules after extensive consultation with the stakeholders. The Rules for the first time provide broad and specific framework for prevention, prohibition, rescue and rehabilitation of child and adolescent workers. To clarify on issues related with help in family and family enterprises and definition of family with respect to child, specific provisions have been incorporated in rules. Further, it also provides for safeguards of artists which have been permitted to work under the Act, in terms of hours of work and working conditions. The rules provide for specific provisions incorporating duties and responsibilities of enforcement agencies in order to ensure effective implementation and compliance of the provisions of the Act. In order to clarify the issues on Schedule of hazardous occupations and processes, the Schedule has been reviewed and the intent notification has been issued to include a comprehensive list of about 118 occupation and processes.

For fulfilment of the objective of a strong legislation, it requires equally strong tools on field to be implemented and to provide this, the Ministry of Labour and Employment has already prepared a comprehensive strategy for effective enforcement. Labour being in the concurrent list, an elaborate Action Plan was sent to all State Governments' after enactment of the Legislation for implementation and all the State Governments' have been sensitised about the major shift in the legislation with the direction to spread the same to the ground level. To remove all ambiguities a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is being framed for all stakeholders particularly, enforcing agencies and this would be supported by IT Platform "PENCIL" which has components ensuring enforcement of the Act, mechanism for redressal of complaints, child tracking system and a monitoring mechanism. This platform would integrate all the State Governments with the Central Government for effective coordination and convergence of various measures being taken for compliance of the Act.

To meet the objective of child labour free society, the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) has been aligned with changes in the Act. NCLP is a rehabilitative scheme for child and adolescent labour. Under the scheme, children are provided bridge education, vocational training, mid-day meal, stipend, health check-up etc. This scheme has been strengthened recently in terms of improving its quality and extending its coverage to all the districts of the country. The annual expenditure under the Scheme for FY 2016-17 was approx Rs. 105 Crore and budget allocation for the current FY 2017-18 is Rs. 150 Crore.

There is historical precedence that curbing any social menace requires concerted action of Government, civil society, corporates and most importantly community. When community awareness and community monitoring are active it surely yields the desired result in less time. As mentioned by Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi "After the total prohibition of child labour,

ratification of two conventions is yet another important step by Government of India in protecting all our children from exploitation and abuse. However, it now remains a collective responsibility of everyone to do their bit to remove the scourge of child labour from the country.” Other prominent members of the Civil Society groups and the child labour activists have widely appreciated India’s recent initiative for complete eradication of child labour.

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