

CM: Action plan soon to tackle child labour

KEEPING EYE Says there is need to track rescued children till they complete their education and are gainfully employed

Anil Kumar

anil.kumar@hindustantimes.com

PATNA: Chief minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday said a high-level committee, headed by the chief secretary, would be constituted to recommend an action plan for tackling the scourge of child labour. The plan would also include proper educational and economic rehabilitation of the rescued children and their families.

Launching the web-based Child Labour Tracking System (CLTS) and media campaign at an event to mark World Day Against Child Labour, the chief minister gave in-principle approval to the charter of demands, prepared and presented by rescued children. He also announced financial assistance of ₹25,000 to each rescued child from CM Relief Fund.

On the occasion, children aired their aspirations and expectations from the government that included declaration and celebration of period beginning August 15, 2016 to August 14, 2017 as the year of child, besides proper educational facilities to fulfil their dreams, residential schools and skill development training for employability. Kumar assured them that the committee would look into their demands.

"Every child registered under the CLTS will be given ₹25,000, over and above the present entitlements. It will go directly into their bank account and help instil in them a sense of confidence and some amount of certainty about their future," Kumar said, while addressing the rescued children, NGOs and government representatives.

Emphasizing on the need for Child Labour Tracking System, he said the main reasons for incidence of child labour were illiteracy and poverty. "Even



Chief minister Nitish Kumar with education minister Ashok Choudhary at a function, in Patna on Sunday. AP DUBE/HT PHOTO

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NITISH KUMAR, chief minister

if child labourers are rescued, there is no guarantee that they will not be forced to work in that capacity again. As such, there is need for tracking these children and monitoring their progress till the time they complete their education and are gainfully employed," Kumar said.

The CM, however, expressed surprise over the prevalence of child labour, despite being a punishable offence. "It becomes even more appalling in view of government's emphasis on nutrition and education, besides efforts to provide all facilities to the needy - right from their birth and also Anganwadi Kendras. To name a few government schemes, mid-day meals, free uniforms, books, cycles, et al, have been planned to encourage children continue their education, he added.

Orphan children and those

coming from minority and economically weaker sections become victims of child labour, the CM said, adding, "We have to see what more requires to be done. There is need for focussed campaign against child labour and continuous programme-based action plan to deal with the situation in association with non-governmental support."

Education minister Ashok Choudhary, labour resources minister Vijay Prakash, cooperative minister Alok Mehta, social welfare minister Kumar Manju Verma, labour resources department secretary Dipak Kumar Singh, social welfare department principal secretary Vandana Kinni, labour commissioner, Md Salim and state representative of Unicef Yameem Majumdar also spoke on the need to tackle the issue.