

## INDIA LAUNCHES LIBERATION CARAVAN



Ahmed (*name changed*) lodestar of the fight against child domestic labour at the launch of Mukti Caravan

### **Child Domestic Labour**

Domestic child labour, one of the most common and universal occupations for child workers, is also one of the worst forms of child labour. Its informal nature combined with the vulnerability of children, makes domestic child labour both exploitative and hazardous.

The Government of India's 2001 census estimated there are 12.05 million children out of school and involved in child labour. However, Bachpan Bachao Andolan estimates that there at least 10 million (1 Crore) children working in the domestic and hospitality sectors alone. Since domestic help is "invisible" slavery, abuse such as branding, beating, and even rape go unheard and unnoticed. Most child domestic labourers are between the ages of 12 and 17 and, in India, the majority are girls, since they are seen as more docile and easier to control and it is considered that household work is their domain. Domestic child labourers have been *invisible* behind the doors of houses and *invisible* in the eyes of society which is responsible for protecting them.

### **Bachpan Bachao Andolan and Child Domestic Labour**

BBA's struggle against child domestic labour began with Ahmed (*name changed*) in 1996. Young Ahmed, who was employed at the residence of an IAS officer, was burnt with a stove by his employer because he dared to drink the milk meant for his child. BBA took up Ahmed's case with NHRC, and after extensive investigation in 1999 a service rule was passed prohibiting government servants from employing children as domestic servants.

### **Notification Banning Employment of Children below 14 years as domestic servants or in Hospitality sector**

In the month of July 2006, the Indian Government has issued a notification banning the employment of children under 14 years of age as domestic servants or servants or in

*dhabas* (roadside eateries), restaurants, hotels, motels, teashops, resorts, spas or in other recreational centres, effective from 10 October 2006.

### **From Work To School Campaign**

A comprehensive approach to eliminate child labour and replace it with universal education requires a focus on bringing to justice those responsible for this crime, and on carrying out effective measures to prevent it, while maintaining a humanitarian and compassionate approach in rendering assistance to its victims.

BBA has organised a month-long campaign “From Work To School” due to the recent notification. The campaign will support government actions and build social and government accountability and will run in three stages; Awareness, Mobilisation and Action.

<b>AWARENESS WEEK</b>	<b>MOBILISATION WEEK</b>	<b>ACTION WEEK</b>
<p>House-to-house, person-to-person awareness is at stake to end child domestic labour. Awareness activities involve campaign on wheels (<i>MUKTI CARAVAN</i>), public demonstrations, use of print and electronic media, etc. The “<i>This Home is Child Labour Free</i>” sticker will lead not only to raise awareness but also to act as positive reinforcement. Emphasis would be on the recent notification under the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, which has banned child domestic labour and child labour in service industry. <i>From 10 October 2006, employing child domestics below 14 years of age is a CRIME!</i></p>	<p>Post Awareness week from 10 October 2006, people would be encouraged to file complaints on the employment of underage children as domestic helps or child labourers in service industry. Child participation is at the core of our campaign. Student volunteers, former child labourers, and other children will be leading the way of campaign activities. By educating children on the issue, we can educate their parents, communities, and the society as a whole. Mass picketing would also be done in areas identified as prone to child labour and where child domestic labour is prevalent.</p>	<p>It is imperative that children who work in conditions that are life threatening, physically or psychologically disabling, morally degrading or which are detrimental to their physical or moral integrity must be removed and rehabilitated as top priority. Following complaints and reports of child labourers especially child domestic labourers and children working in roadside dhabas, tea-stalls, etc., the direct action week would see large-scale rescue, withdrawal and repatriation of child labourers. Liaise with the government and concerned departments for rehabilitation and repatriation of the rescued child labourers under the appropriate laws.</p>

## 6 OCTOBER 2006: “FROM WORK TO SCHOOL” CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

The month long campaign was launched on the 6 October by prominent filmmaker and social activist, Mr. Mahesh Bhatt, actress and former Miss India, Gul Panag. Also present at the launch were Mr Sanjay Bijli, CEO PVR Cinemas and Mr. M L Dhar, Dy Secretary, Labour Department, Delhi Government along with Mr. Kailash Satyarthi, Chair Bachpan Bachao Andolan and Global March Against Child Labour. The campaign was launched by former child labourers who are now leaders in the fight against child labour.



“From Work To School” campaign poster launched by child domestics rescued by BBA, Mahesh Bhatt, Gul Panag, Sanjeev Bijli, M L Dhar, Labour Department, Kailash Satyarthi

BBA and Global March Chairperson Kailash Satyarthi on the occasion remarked, “We welcome the government for its decision to prohibit employment of children as domestic servants and in tea-shops and dhabas, etc. This is a major step forward in recognition of the invisible slavery of the child domestic labourers and a movement to end all forms of child labour by the government. It is important that this new notification is taken as an important tool to bring all children out of labour and provide free compulsory primary education to all. It is important that the govt. follows this step with rigorous implementation of law and effective steps for rehabilitation of children.”



Kailash Satyarthi making his speech at the launch of “From Work To School Campaign” at PVR Priya, New Delhi. Also seen Are Mahesh Bhatt, prominent filmmaker and social activist, and Sanjeev Bijli, CEO PVR Cinemas. In the background is a sample slide.

### **Bollywood (Indian Film Industry) Joins Anti-Child Labour Campaign**

Mahesh Bhatt stated that the elimination of a deep-rooted problem like child labour needs a revolution and a leader like Kailash Satyarthi at its helm. Everyone should join hands in this revolution and end child labour. He lauded the efforts of BBA and PVR in coming together for the campaign.



Kailash Satyarthi and Mahesh Bhatt at the launch of “From Work To School Campaign” at the PVR Cinemas

Gul Panag called upon the general public to be sensitized about the issue; only then would the law be properly implemented. She pledged her support to BBA in all its future activities as well.

### **Anti-Child Labour Drive Goes to Cinemas**

PVR Cinemas have joined the “From Work To School” campaign. Anti-child labour slides are being shown across all PVR Cinemas in the country. There are xyz PVR Cinemas in the country being visited by xyz number of cinemagoers. With the festival

season round the corner the number of cinemagoers is expected to go up by xyz%. The reach of the anti-child labour messages is thus, xyz.

Sanjeev Kumar Bijli, the Executive Director of PVR Cinemas, welcomed the new law of the government and pledged the support to BBA during the campaign. He mentioned that slides would be shown across the PVR cinemas in the country sensitizing the public about the new law and child labour in general.



Mukti Caravan children (former child labourers) performing at PVR Priya Complex

To help the government machinery in the enforcement of the new legal provision, BBA's units and volunteers from 10 different states of the country will gather information and complaints from children, parents, and concerned citizens and pass it on to the labour officers.

### **Middle Class Homes Declare “My Home is Child Labour Free”**

Majority of the child domestics are employed in the homes of middle class families in the metros and cities. Thus, as part of its social consciousness and accountability drive, BBA has specifically targeted the Resident Welfare Associations. Their help would also be sought in reporting child labour in the households. This started with the Triveni Resident Welfare Association of Sheikh Sarai in New Delhi. Mahesh Bhatt and Gul Panag followed and cemented their support to BBA campaign by pasting “My Home is Child Labour Free” stickers on the homes of residents



“My Home is Child Labour Free!”  
Mahesh Bhatt and Gul Panag with a resident of Sheikh Sarai.



“My Home is Child Labour Free!”  
Mahesh Bhatt and Gul Panag pasting the stickers

## **10 OCTOBER 2006: INDIA LAUNCHES LIBERATION CARAVAN AGAINST CHILD LABOUR**

From 10 October 2006, child domestic labour and employment of child labour in roadside restaurants, tea-stalls, resorts, etc. is a punishable offence in India. It is also glorious day in the history of the fight against slavery, with all the major civil society organisations coming together on the roads to eliminate child labour. It saw the Indian Government (Ministry of Labour and Employment), ILO, UNICEF, Trade Unions, Teachers Unions, Members of Parliament, children and activists of the BBA, Global March, and partner organisations coming together on the roads of Delhi to flag off the Mukti Caravan (Liberation Caravan) against child labour.



The launch of Mukti Caravan

Ms. Leyla Tegmo-Reddy, Director and ILO Country Representative, India, Ms. Victoria Rialp, Head of Child Protection Unit in UNICEF, Shri Ravi Prakash Verma, the Member of Parliament, Mr. Shahid Meezan, Director in Minister of Labour and Employment, Ms. Harjot Kaur, Deputy Secretary, Mr. Simon Steyne, Worker member of the ILO Governing Body and ILO Workers' Group spokesperson on child labour, Mr. I P Anand, employers' representative in ILO Governing Board, Mr. N Adyanthaya, Vice President, INTUC and Worker member, ILO Governing Body, Mr. Kailash Satyarthi, Chairperson BBA and Global March, civil society representatives and a large number of former child labourers and activists were present on the occasion.



Kailash Satyarthi (Chairperson of BBA & Global March), I.P Anand (Employers' representative ILO Governing Board), Simon Steyne (Workers' member ILO Governing Body and ILO Workers' Group spokesperson on child labour), Ravi Prakash Verma (MP) and N. Adyanthaya (Vice President INTUC and Workers' member ILO Governing Body)

BBA Chairperson Kailash Satyarthi welcomed the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's statement expressing Government's resolve to eliminate child labour as a major

movement to end all forms of child labour by the government. BBA he said is committed to join all the forces, especially with Government in realizing the objectives. Satyarthi called upon the Government to ensure effective implementation of law by empowering and training the labour inspectors to verify and identify the child labourers in the houses and other places. The law does not permit them to do so. Satyarthi also asked for a coherence policy and action between various government agencies and schemes including Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid Day Meal scheme, NCLP, Indus etc. to enforce effective law enforcement and rehabilitation of children. The Government must also seek cooperation of all stakeholders in providing rehabilitation and education to children.

Leyla Tegmo-Reddy, Director, International Labour Organisation (ILO), India on the occasion remarked, “Holistic approach and collective action is needed for the elimination of child labour. ILO has international experience and is willing to share it. Bachpan Bachao Andolan is an example of collective action. ILO supports BBA and we will go along with BBA.”

“We are here because the children (former child labourers) are here. Children are their own best advocates and it is important for us to encourage and support them in their endeavours against child labour This is a great platform for ILO, UNICEF, Government and BBA to keep their promises by working together. Children can hold us accountable” asserted Victoria Rialp, Head of Child Protection Unit of UNICEF India. She further said that this liberation caravan is the most effective tool to generate awareness among the masses.



Harjot Kaur, Deputy Secretary of Ministry of Labour  
And Employment

“We're warning people they will be jailed for employing children. We will prosecute offenders to make an example out of them. Charities and children and women shelters run by government agencies have been asked to provide facilities to children thrown out of work. We're equipped to provide for thousands of children nationwide. Existing rehabilitation programs for children were being enlarged to make sure that safeguards were in place for those children who were laid off as a result of the new legislation,” said Labour Ministry Deputy Secretary Harjot Kaur applauding the work of BBA and

reiterating the need for all agencies to work in tandem for complete elimination of child labour.

Pong-Sul Ahn, Senior Specialist, ILO mentioned that it is important that all actors must come together in the fight against child labour. Adult workers must be given work and minimum wage so that children can be withdrawn from labour and an adult can replace the child.

“Employers, workers, media, NGOs, central and state government must act together to end child labour. It is high time that the government tackles this menace and this is the first step in the right direction and we wholeheartedly welcome this,” said N M Adyanthaya Vice President Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) and Workers’ member, ILO Governing Body

Ravi Prakash Verma, Member of Parliament welcoming this notification said that is important now that government and the civil society acts together to implement the law. The future of our children depends on the effective and prompt implementation.



Simon Steyne and Kailash Satyarthi flagging off Mukti Caravan

Simon Steyne, Workers’ member ILO Governing Body and ILO Workers’ Group spokesperson on child labour, brought greetings from the international trade union movement. He stressed that the struggle against domestic child labour was at the top of the agenda of the ILO Workers’ group and it was important to recall that girls were the majority denied freedom and education in this type of illegal work. He welcomed the Indian Government’s notification and reiterated that without effective, universal coverage of well-trained and child –friendly labour inspection, the law could not be properly enforced. Education was a human right for every child and was also the key to sustaining more equitable development in India’s booming economy. He called on all actors to join the alliance to make the law work for the children and the nation.



Shahid Meezan, Director in Minister of Labour and Employment

In a unique way of seeking support from the corporate sector in this mission, the government wants business houses to direct their employees not to hire children as domestic workers. “If corporates ban their employees, it would be of great help,” said Shahid Meezan, Director, Child Labour Division, Labour and Employment Ministry (ML&E). Besides, the labour ministry has written to corporate houses and organisations like CII, FICCI, PHDCCI, ASSOCHAM etc for their active participation in sensitising people and publicity. “The police and other enforcing agencies are being sensitised on raids and rehabilitation. We have an ongoing National Child Labour Project running in 250 districts across 21 states with the help of NGOs. There are shelter homes where the rescued children are taken. Besides education, mid-day meal and health coverage, a stipend of Rs100 is also provided to them,” said Mr. Meezan.

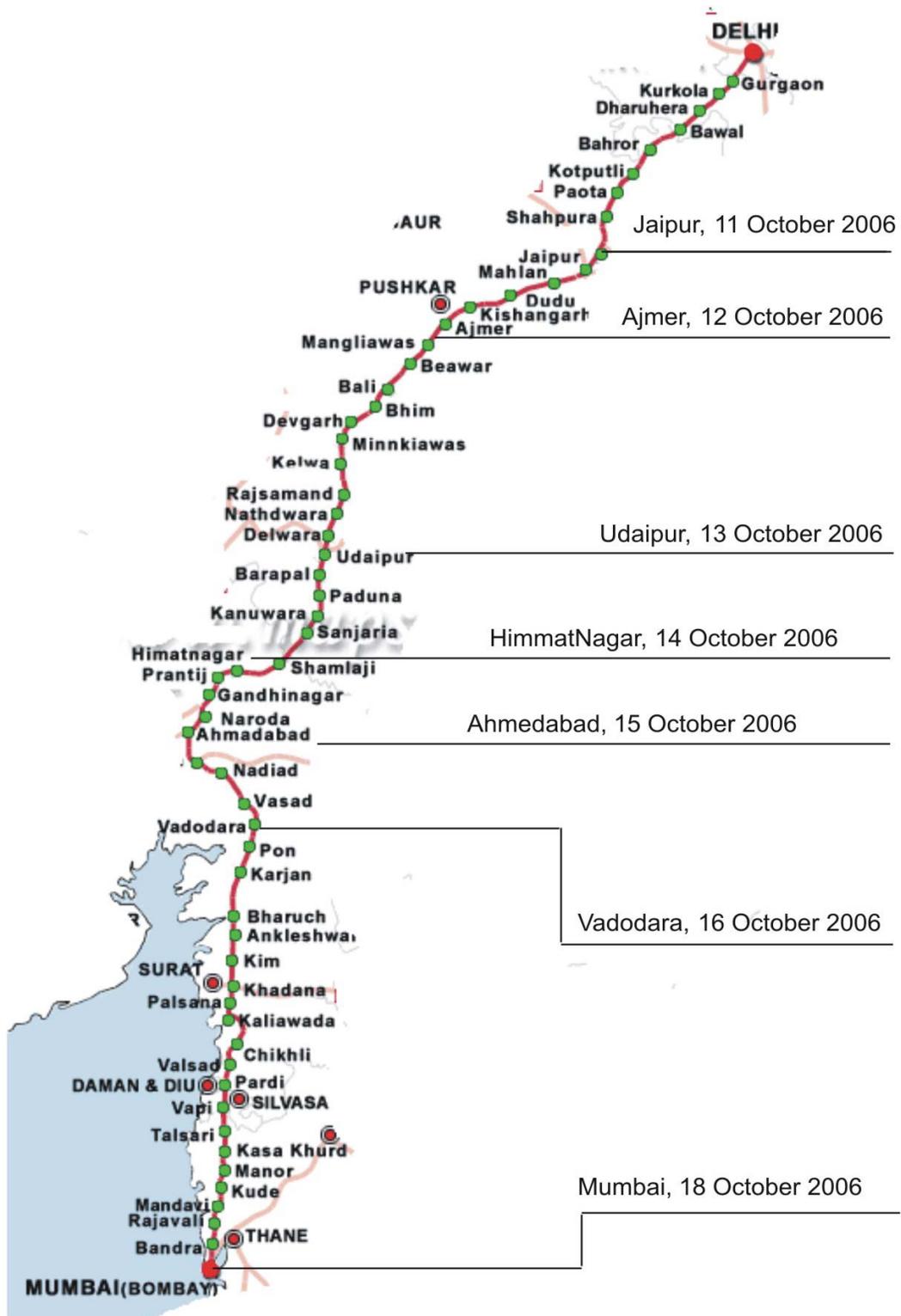


Children of Bal, Balika and Mukti Ashram performing



Children of Bal, Balika and Mukti Ashram performing

The Mukti Caravan is a 1,200 km campaign on wheels of former child labourers trained in folk art and street theatre. They will not only raise awareness and sensitize the people, but will also create enabling environment for effective enforcement of the notification. The Mukti Caravan would travel from Delhi to Mumbai and on the route, would organize on the spot activities, to mobilize and sensitize people against the heinous offence of employing children and denying their rights to education.



**Delhi- Mumbai Mukti Caravan (Liberation Caravan) Route**