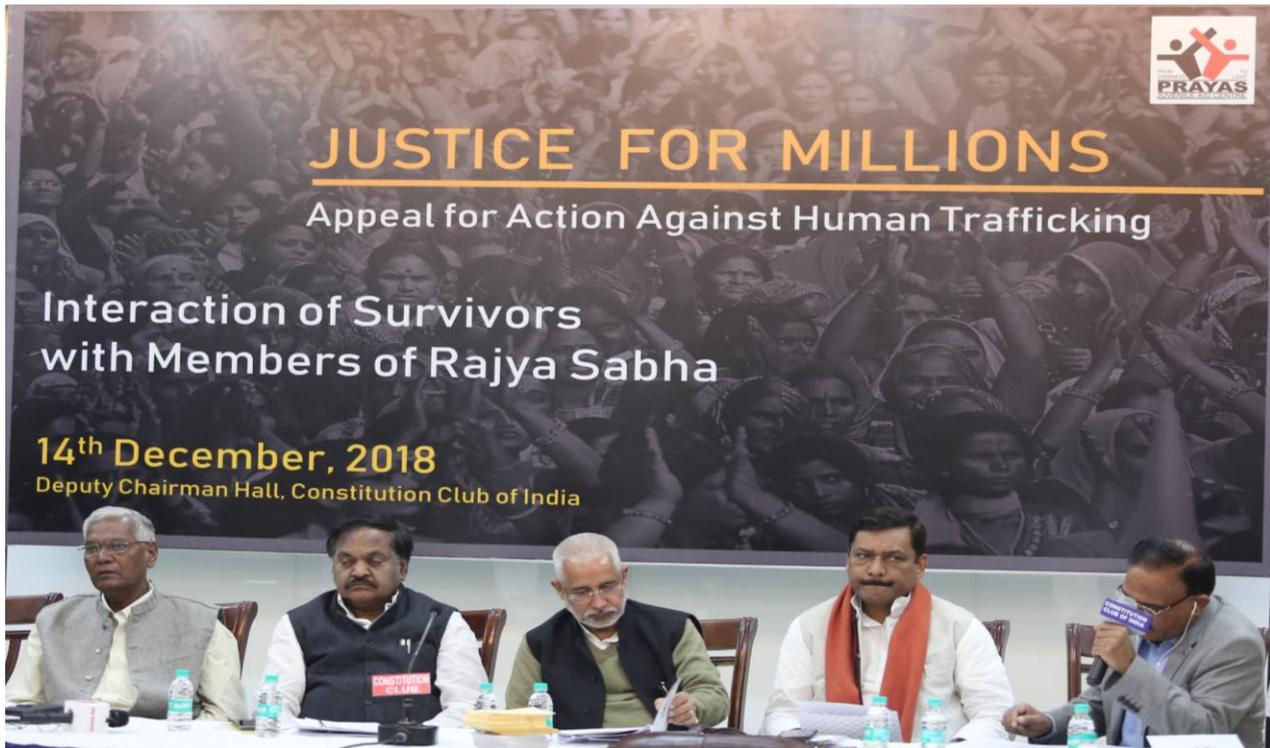


RAJYA SABHA MEMBERS PLEDGE SUPPORT FOR PASSAGE OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING BILL AT PRAYAS PROGRAM



At a unique program to bring Rajya Sabha MPs face to face with trafficking victims from across the country every MP who attended the program promised to support the Trafficking of Persons Bill (Prevention , Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill 2018 when it comes up for discussion in the Rajya Sabha.

The program called ‘Justice for Millions’ organized by Prayas and several NGOs from various parts of the country the country brought together MPs like D Raja (CPI), Pradeep Tamta (INC), Akhilesh Prasad Singh (INC), N Gokulakrishnan (AIDMK), Satnarain Jatia (BJP) and Bhuvaneshwar Kalitha (INC).

The hopeful survivors of human trafficking hailing from different parts of the country who have come out of their trauma made an appeal to the MPs to bring justice to the victims of human trafficking by ensuring the passage of Anti Human Trafficking Bill in the Winter Session of the parliament. The bill has already been passed by the Lok Sabha in July.

As per the NCRB 2016 report, a total of 15,379 victims of human-trafficking were reported in 2016, out of which almost 60% were minors. The report has also estimated that more than one lakh children (1,11,569) have gone missing till 2016, and 55,625 of them remained untraced. Survivors from various survivor collectives – Utthan, Vimukthi, Azaad Shakti Abhiyaan, Bandhan Mukti and Worker Survivor Support group shared their experiences of human trafficking, ranging from sexual exploitation, bonded labour, forced marriage and other forms of trafficking.

The survivors also pointed out the glaring gaps in the existing legislations which had led to more suffering after rescue. They appealed the members of Rajya Sabha for passage of the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018 which has strong inbuilt mechanisms for voluntary rehabilitation and victim protection, in this Winter Session which could be last effective for of this Government session barring the Budget session.

In his address, Amod K Kanth, Founder General Secretary, Prayas, said, “It’s time that Indian laws have necessary provisions to tackle the complex organized crime of Human Trafficking. We are thankful to the government for drafting a comprehensive and robust law which provides for necessary tools to address the crime and safeguards the interest of the victims.”

Veteran parliamentarian D Raja made a surprise announcement that his party would include Human Trafficking as part of his party manifesto setting in motion a process that could prompt other parties to follow suit as they prepare for the coming election in 2019.

Akhilesh Prasad Singh said – “It’s sad to see how people have shamed humanity for monetary considerations. This must stop. I think all parties – BJP, INC, other parties should discuss this Bill in this winter session and pass it with necessary provisions.”

Pradeep Tamta, INC said – “I have heard the tales of survivors here and understand the suffering of thousands of human trafficking survivors who are not present here. We understand the urgency of discussion of the Bill and Congress party is all for the Bill but of course after discussion on the Bill.”

N Gokulakrishnan, AIADMK said – “Bills of such importance take a back stage among other Political issues. I will support the discussion of the Bill in this winter session of Parliament”

Various survivors who narrated their tales to the MPs and the media represented almost all varieties of trafficking. For instance Ranjan (name changed), survivor of organ trafficking said, “It’s important for the Indian society to talk about such grave issues and therefore we reached out to the citizens in various parts of India and sought their support in our fight against Human Trafficking. Collectively we have collected more than 1.15 lakh post-cards addressed to the Prime Minister, in support of the Trafficking of Persons, Bill 2018.”

Other survivors who were victims of sexual exploitation, child labour, bonded labour etc also came out with their tales before the MPs.

The survivors also announced that they planned to submit a petition in support of the Bill to the chairman of Rajya Sabha and Vice President of India, Shri Venkaiah Naidu. The problem of trafficking is particularly prevalent in India since it is a source, destination and transit country for victims of trafficking. The new proposed legislation, Trafficking of Persons Bill (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) 2018, unlike the existing legislations of Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (which cover only sex trafficking) or Bonded Labour Act (for crimes related to Bonded Labour), covers all aspects of human trafficking- including aggravated forms of trafficking like forced labour, begging, administering chemical substances and hormones for early sexual maturity, forced marriage, etc.

The Bill provides for designated Courts for fast-tracking trials and timely repatriation of foreign victims - within a period of one year from taking into cognizance, which is a highly commendable move as there are many cases of trafficking from across neighboring countries such as Nepal and Sri Lanka. Another path-breaking addition to the Bill has been the formation of the National Anti-Trafficking Bureau (NATB), which will coordinate with authorities in international organizations, and facilitate inter-state and transborder transfer of evidence

