

SPEECH OF THE HONOURABLE GOVERNOR PROF JAGDISH MUKHI

8TH AUGUST 2021

Programme by UTSAH Child Rights Org | Assam

A very Good afternoon to all the dignitaries present here. At the outset I congratulate UTSAH, a Child Rights Organization and its Founder Shri Miguel Das Queah for organizing this programme.

I am happy that today a very special poem is unveiled and released. The theme of this year's World Day Against Trafficking in Persons that was celebrated on the 30th of July 2021 was "VICTIMS' VOICES LEAD THE WAY". This poem is completely in sync with the theme as it tells the story of a trafficked child, from the perspective of a tender mind. Poet Partha Sarathi Mahanta has narrated the pains, the hopes and the aspirations of a tender child in a very powerful way.

Friends, Child trafficking is a major issue, not only in India but across the world. More than 40 million people have been trafficked across the world, out of which 21 per cent are children (ILO). In India too trafficking has been a problem. Assam is not an exception. Total Cases regarding child trafficking received by Child Welfare Committee (CWC) in 2020-2021 is 249. Just recently, a total of 40 children (24 Male and 16 Female) were rescued from Sikkim. After the CWC passed orders, 4 of the girls

have been have been restored to their families while the remaining 12 girls have been accommodated in two Children' Home at Guwahati. In respect of rescued boys, 6 have been restored to their families, while orders of the CWC are awaited in respect of the remaining boys. These boys will also be housed in Children' Home for imparting them with life skills.

Friends, children constitute an extremely important segment of our Nation. Therefore, it becomes necessary to take special care for their protection. The Constitution of India has various provisions that mandate the State to undertake necessary measures to secure the development of children.

However, to realize the provisions of the Constitution, it is essential that all stakeholders ranging from the Government, Non-Government to the Private sector fulfil their responsibilities towards the children.

Owing to their tender age, the voices of children are often left unheard. Therefore, it becomes doubly necessary for everyone to take proactive action, so as to bring the issues of children to the forefront, and help them grow in a safe and secure environment.

Friends we all know that today's children are tomorrow's leaders. However, many a time it is seen that childhood which is the formative period of anybody's life is ruined because of some rogue elements. Children are the primary asset of any nation. Assam has 41 per cent of its population who are children and it is our prime responsibility to act responsibly and create an environment for their holistic development. 'There is something very common in every individual present here today that is... We all were children and had gone through the phase of childhood and thus we can co-relate'.

Even Government of Assam has also launched several schemes for an enabling environment so that children of the state can bloom themselves and spread their aura once they are grown up.

Child Protection is that component of child rights that can never be addressed in isolation. Every institution and every individual of the Nation will have to converge to make protection of children a reality. The Government, the Judiciary, the Police and the Civil Society have to join hands to bring about an effective change in the lives of those many children of India who are still struggling to survive. Most importantly, the Government and the Civil society must strengthen Village-level Child Protection mechanisms so that crimes like child trafficking can be prevented at the grassroot.

In the year 1992, India ratified to the “United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child”. By signing this convention, we have committed ourselves to undertake necessary steps to uphold the rights of children in our country. So, it is our duty to ensure that the rights of children are not violated at any cost. Organizations like UTSAH, has been working for over a decade to help sexually abused and trafficked children.

The future of Assam’s children is inextricably tied to the importance given to them in the policies and decisions made by stakeholders. While the government must adopt effective and sustainable measures ranging from strategic budgetary allocations to increasing the capacity of service providers at all levels, the role to be played by communities, parents and children themselves cannot be understated. The demand for quality development services must be made along with accountability, if the children of Assam are to live productive lives.

On this day, I pledge to do my bit for the protection of children of Assam and of India. I also expect that each and every citizen of this country and the world to commit themselves to the task of securing a better future for the children of our country.

We should never look away when we see incidences of child abuse. We should always take an extra step to reach out to all those children who are in need of care and protection. While reminding ourselves that children are the future of our Nation, we should not forget that they are also the present of our Nation. Only when we realize this, we can bring about a beautiful transformation in the lives of the children of our country. A Nation's success is only possible if its children are protected.

Today as I unveil "Okoni Okoni Boli" by Shri Partha Sarathi Mahanta, I hope that its message will reach out to each and every citizen of our country. The message in this poem will make us realize the pains and sufferings of little children and motivate us to fight the evil of child trafficking and child abuse from our society. I request everyone to go through this poem and appreciate its message.

I congratulate Shri Miguel Das Queah and the entire team of UTSAH for creating this beautiful video poem. I specially congratulate Shri Partha Sarathi Mahanta on writing this poem for UTSAH.

Let us all commit to stand together and make our State and our country, safe for each and every child.

Jai Hind !

