

# Business Standard

## Over 70,000 missing children rescued under MHA drive: Rajnath

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More than 70,000 missing children have been rescued in different parts of the country under the home ministry's special initiative, Union minister Rajnath Singh said today.

Addressing a seminar on child and adolescent labour here, the home minister also said the country would try to get rid of child labour by 2022.

"The Home Ministry has launched 'Operation Smile' to locate missing children. More than 70,000 missing children have been rescued till date," he said.

The 'Operation Smile' was first launched by the home ministry in January 2015 to rescue and rehabilitate the missing children. Since then the programme has been continuing with the active help of the state governments.

Singh said childhood is the best gift of God, but those who get trapped in child labour are deprived of that beautiful gift.

"We are committed for a child labour free India. In the next 5 years we will try to get rid of child labour. Let us together pledge for building a child labour free India by 2022," he said at the seminar where a web portal named PENCIL, which connects all stakeholders working to check child labour, was launched.

The 'PENCIL' will help in effective implementation of National Child Labour Project (NCLP).

PENCIL (Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labour) is an electronic platform for no child labour developed by the labour ministry.

The portal came into being after it was felt that there was a need to create a robust implementing and monitoring mechanism for both enforcement of the legislative provisions and effective implementation of the NCLP especially in the backdrop that the subject of labour is in the concurrent list and enforcement to a large extent depends on respective state governments.

The labour ministry said that it was felt that an online portal which connects the Centre to the state governments, districts and to all project societies, would provide a mechanism for implementation. In this backdrop, the online portal PENCIL was conceptualised.

PENCIL portal has five components -- child tracking system, complaint corner, state government, national child labour project and convergence.