

Sixteenth Loksabha

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Title: Need to take steps to check fake social media news on child trafficking.

SHRI BHARTRUHARI MAHTAB (CUTTACK): I rise to mention in this House about a very serious incident that is happening throughout the country. The National Crime Record Bureau in its last statistical report for 2016 has reported that 1,11,569 children were reported missing that year across the country. The NCRB further reported that half of such missing children have been traced while the rest are presumed abducted, remained untraced at the end of the year.

Not necessarily all of these children were abducted but there is no doubt that majority of such children were abducted, with bias towards female victims. Two third of the missing children were females which points towards the potential of sexual exploitation.

Further, there is a genuine fear of child snatchers in rural areas, particularly tribal areas, of the country and this crime is considered relatively more heinous in human minds. As a result, any rumour of presence of child snatchers in an area energizes mob to gather in greater numbers than a rumour of any other sort of criminal activity.

Recently, three Odia boys who were working in Chennai were walking back to their homes and they started giving chocolates to some street urchins whom they found on the streets. This was seen by some people on the street who mistook those three Odia boys to be child snatchers and started chasing them. These three boys ran for their lives and fortunately they were saved. They were just giving some chocolates to children out of love and that created panic on the street and they had to run for their lives.

I, therefore, urge upon the Government to take necessary steps to rein in spread of false rumours on social media which has actually affected large parts of the country. Rumours are being spread on social media like Whatsapp and this has resulted in mob lynching of a person in Assam. It is necessary that rapid

prosecution of those found guilty of child trafficking is done and the local population is made aware of safety of their children particularly in remote areas where the police is ineffectual.

Hon. Minister of Women and Child Welfare is moving a very important Bill today. The problem today in the country is that child snatching rumours are creating widespread panic and they are leading to incidents of mob lynching which is actually creating problems in the country. The Government should take such steps that can not only address the issue of missing children but also the issue of mob lynching of people wrongly suspected to be child snatchers, as these two issues are deeply interconnected.

HON. SPEAKER: Dr. Kulmani Samal, Shri P.R. Sundaram, Kunwar Pushpendra Singh Chandel, Shri Rabindra Kumar Jena, Shri Bhairon Prasad Mishra, Dr. P.K. Biju, Dr. Kirit P. Solanki, Shri Nishikant Dubey, Shrimati Supriya Sule and Shri Dhananjay Mahadik are permitted to associate with the issue raised by Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab.