

# First Rugmark school opened

**Staff Reporter**

Varanasi

THE FIRST Rugmark Primary School was inaugurated at village Jagapur in the Bhadohi district by Mr Kailash Satyarthi, chairperson, Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA), and winner of prestigious Robert F Kennedy award for Human Rights.

This school is the first of a series of schools the Rugmark Foundation plans to establish in the carpet belt for the rehabilitation of illegal child labour employed in the carpet industry. The foundation is working in the field since last 20 months to remove the illegal child labour from the industry.

The Rugmark Foundation is

famous in many European as well as other western nation which import carpets from India for its endeavour in the removal of child labour from carpet industry. It issues 'Rugmark' labels to its licences to make it easy for them to export those carpets manufactured without the use of child labour.

The Rugmark Foundation boasts of over 102 licencees who support its efforts and a large number of applicants whose cases are being cleared after a thorough inspection of their looms.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Satyarthi said that over 25 crore children are in servitude the world over including developed nations. He lamented that the Government of India is not serious

on the issue of removal and rehabilitation of child labour from various hazardous industries in India.

Maj Gen Satish Sondhi, executive director, Rugmark Foundation, ensured the commitment of Rugmark Foundation in the rehabilitation of the displaced children. He said there will be serious efforts from the Foundation to educate the children and to help them to stand on their own legs once they complete their schooling.

He requested the cooperation of carpet exporters in the endeavour. Speaking on the occasion, Mr Kailash Baranwal, prominent exporter and president of All-India Carpet Manufacturers Association welcomed the Rugmark efforts.

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Cong will never support SP; Markandey Singh

Staff Reporter

Varanasi

SENIOR Congress leader and former president of the Banaras Hindu University Students' Union (BHUSU) Markandey Singh expressed surprise over the recent statement of national general secretary of the Samajwadi Party (SP) Kapil Dev Singh and said that the Congress would never pledge its support to the SP in UP.

The former BHUSU leader said that the SP represented the 'neo-feudals' or the 'creamy layer' of the Backward castes in UP whereas the commitment of the Congress-Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) alliance was to the 'social reformation'.

Mr Singh, reacting over the statement of the general secretary of SP Kapil Dev Singh that the Congress, breaking the tie with the BSP, should support the United Front (UF) for the constitution of government in the state, said that before giving such suggestion he (Kapil Dev Singh) should introspect.

He said that there was no question of developing relationship with the leader of neo-feudals, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, or break up the tie with the BSP. Reacting sharply, he said that it seemed that Mr Kapil Dev has become the victim of cultural backwardness.

# Maneka's pet project for child labourers gets going

## 'Balashraya' a rehabilitation centre inaugurated

Staff Reporter

Varanasi

THE NOTED environmentalist and MP, Mrs Maneka Gandhi stressed the need for constitution of a technical experts committee to chalk out plan for pollution control in the country.

Mrs Gandhi, who is also the chairperson of the Rugmark Foundation, was at Gopiganj about 60 kilometre from Varanasi to inaugurate a rehabilitation centre 'Balashraya' for the freed child labourers from carpet units on Thursday.

She, while talking to reporters, said that there was a need of environmental evaluation to protect surroundings. The nature or environment should not be exploited in the name of industrialisation, she said adding that the nation could not make an all-round development if the environment was not cared for or protected.

She, expressing concern over the environmental pollution and exploitation, said that the industries should not be established at the cost of environment.

Mrs Gandhi, speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural function of 'Balashraya', said that the opening of this rehabilitation centre for the freed child labourers from carpet units was a significant step taken by the Rugmark



Maneka Gandhi: A lifeline for child workers

Foundation. It was a starting which would set an example for the NGOs at other places, she said and added that it was the need of the hour that all the NGOs working for the well-being of child labourers should work sincerely to bring about a better world for the exploited children.

She said that India was not the only country in the world where children were exploited. The children were being exploited in

other countries also in one way or other, she said adding that but we deserved the credit that we had raised the issue on international level and we are working for the welfare of child labourers.

Mrs Gandhi said that this rehabilitation centre would impart vocational training to the freed-child labourers to make them self-dependent. The foundation did not intend to harm the carpet industry by freeing the child

labourers. It wanted to give something worth valued to those children so that they could be in a position to serve the society and the nation.

Addressing the function, the director of the Foundation and president of the 'Bachpan Bachao Andolan' (BBA) Kailash Satyarthi said that the Rugmark was an Indian initiative, unique in its concept and transparent in its execution. It accorded top-most priority to removal of child labour from carpet weaving units and their suitable rehabilitation, he said adding that alongside it ensured that the carpet trade, under the threat of a ban by importing countries due to child-labour issue and falling demand due to economic recession witnessed world wide, did not suffer. Rather it was our belief that Rugmark would provide a boost to the falling carpet trade graph across the world, he added.

The executive director, Major General Sondhi, welcoming the guests, said that the 'Balashraya' was the first major project by the Rugmark for the rehabilitation and education of child-weavers.

Earlier, the function started with the 'welcome-song' by two children of the Rugmark Primary school. A German importer, Gunter Meyer Burgdore, who was also present on the occasion, donated Rs.10,000 to the centre.

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