

SC mulls PM CARES Fund for orphans


Report raises fears of trafficking among 75,000 children hit by the pandemic

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

Over 75,000 children have been orphaned, abandoned or have lost a parent during the COVID-19 pandemic, and many of them may become victims of human trafficking rackets or descend into crime, a report in the Supreme Court said on Tuesday.

An affidavit filed by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) on July 26 showed that 6,855 children had been orphaned between April 1, 2020 and July 23, 2021. The Commission pointed out that each of these children

 I was talking to the district judicial officers... They said they keep getting frantic calls from the children asking them to be taken back to observation homes... These children should not be left in a position where they have to fend for themselves

L. NAGESWARA RAO,
SC JUDGE



had their own individual social backgrounds. A one-size-fits-all scheme for all children may not work.

The Bench of Justices L. Nageswara Rao and Aniruddha Bose orally asked the Union government whether

the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund (PM CARES Fund) could be extended to children orphaned during the COVID-19 months and not just those whose parent or guardian

died due to the virus.

The scheme originally proposed to fund the educational requirements, in the form of uniforms, textbooks, etc. The scheme would also offer financial help to children for their higher education.

The Supreme Court also questioned West Bengal's claim that only 27 children had become orphans during the COVID-19 months. The court even threatened to order a separate probe. It directed the District Magistrates to collect information.

The Bench was hearing a *suo motu* case on children impacted by the pandemic.