

# NEWS

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## Women being trafficked as sex slaves into Punjab, Haryana: UN expert

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PHILLAUR, MARCH 4

HUMAN trafficking, the second most illicit trade after arms and drug trafficking, is fast becoming prevalent in the two prosperous states of the northern region - Haryana and Punjab - in the form of sex slaves as young girls from states like West Bengal and Bihar are subjected to sexual exploitation by landlords in some areas in the region.

Swasti Rana, Project Associate of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime said this while describing the human trafficking scenario here on Wednesday.

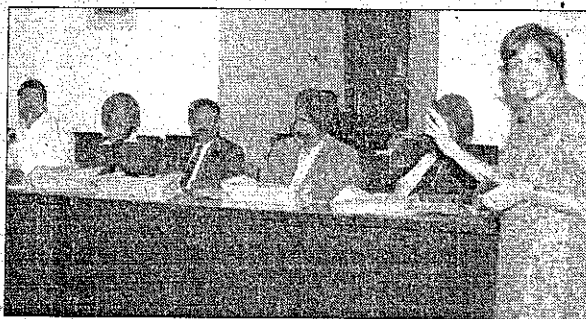
A resourceperson at the three-day training programme of the people on "Anti-human trafficking programme" being held at Punjab Police Academy

(PPA), Phillaur, Rana said an authentic research on human trafficking vindicates prevalence of forced marriages and the phenomenon is specific to the two states only.

The programme is being conducted jointly by UN Office of Drugs Control and Crime and Bureau of Police Research and Development, Ministry of Home Affairs and PPA.

"Though there are no measures or concrete statistics on the extent and magnitude of the human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation in the country, the problem is widely affecting women and children," she informs. "However, it is true that India is fast becoming a hot-spot destination for child sex tourism, which is now coming to light as a thriving business," she said.

On the other hand, the prob-



Swasti Rana, project associate of UN office at a training programme held at PPA in Phillaur. Express photo

lem in Punjab and Haryana exists because of preference for male child. The number of girls has gone down in these two states and consequently women from other states are being transported here and are used as sex slaves apart from employing them as farm labourers in some cases.

In her presentation on

"Concepts and dimensions of trafficking" made before 25 police officers from different districts of the state and Chandigarh, Rana highlighted the difference between human trafficking and human smuggling along with various other aspects pertaining to the problem.

Various incidents have come

to light from some areas in the state where women brought from different states are employed by landlords and are used as sex slaves. The women are later on left to fend for themselves after they bear babies. However, what is surprising is the fact that they do not become complainant because they have to support their livelihood. And this leads to an unsecured future for their children also," said MF Farooqui, deputy director (Indoor) at PPA. In order to tackle human trafficking in the state, Project Coordinator of UNODC, Dr Geeta Sekhon said the team would recommend the Ministry of Home Affairs to establish district units in the states to particularly fight human trafficking, incidents of which are increasingly coming to light day after day.