

Rajib Chatterjee/ [SNS](#)

KOLKATA, March 10. — Children are disappearing with growing frequency in the state, particularly in the remote parts of it. So it seems from the annual report of the Union ministry for women and child development which states that 60 children out of every 100 who were reported to be missing in the country in 2006 were from West Bengal.

The report further revealed that West Bengal's share in the total number of missing children in the country had gone up by nearly 35 per cent in 2006 compared to the previous year even as the country witnessed a sharp fall in the number of missing children last year compared to 2005. Among 3,916 children who went missing from their residences in the country last year, 2,529 cases were reported from West Bengal. The state was followed by Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and Assam which accounted for 370, 206 and 169 children who went missing in 2006 respectively. In 2005 and 2004, West Bengal's share in the total number of missing children in the country were 30.35 and 14.34 per cent respectively. According to the report, 4,037 and 4,780 complaints of children going missing were reported in the country in 2004 and 2005 respectively. In West Bengal, 579 complaints of missing children were recorded in 2004. The alarm bells began ringing in 2005 with 1,451 complaints of missing children being lodged with various police stations in the state.

Many activists, working against children trafficking, believe that lack of initiative on the part of the government to bust trafficking rackets in the bordering districts has led to an alarming increase in the number of children going missing in West Bengal. Officers of the missing persons bureau of the criminal investigation department (CID) said most of the missing complaints in 2006 had come from less developed and remote villages of Murshidabad, North and South 24-Parganas, Nadia, Birbhum, East and West Midnapore and districts of north Bengal.

The situation in Delhi, the report reveals, has worsened only slightly in 2006 compared to the previous year. The state has recorded 370 complaints of missing children. While 1,715 children had gone missing in Delhi in 2004, the number went down to 340 the next year. The women and child development ministry, the report says, will introduce National Tracking System (NTS) to locate missing children. Special efforts would be made to stop trafficking, sexual abuse and commercial exploitation of children, said the report.