

Letter from PM to states can help prioritise issue of bonded labour: NHRC members

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PTI@moneycontrolcom, 8th June, 2019

Human rights experts have suggested that a letter from the prime minister to chief ministers will help prioritise the issue of bonded and migrant labour.

During an open house session hosted by the National Human Rights Commission on June 7 evening, participants discussed on the issue and felt that the root cause of this menace lies in the agrarian crisis, which needs to be addressed on priority in the country, a senior NHRC official said on June 8.

"It was also suggested that a letter from the prime minister to the chief ministers will help priorities this issue on the lines of mission mode campaigns, like the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan," the NHRC said in a statement.

NHRC Member Justice P C Pant, said a preventive approach is needed to end bonded labour, as it has acquired various "new forms and dimensions" with changing times and vocations since the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act was enacted in 1976.

Pant said bonded labour contracts are not purely economic in India and these are reinforced by custom or coercion in many sectors such as agriculture, silk, mining, match production and brick kiln industries, among others.

He said that robust inter- state coordination mechanisms involving all ministries, agencies, trade unions and NGOs are required to address the issues of migrant workers, who may end up becoming bonded labour.

DM Mulay, Member, NHRC, said for the robust implementation of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, it will be necessary to increase the conviction rate of those involved in subjecting people to bonded labour to act as a deterrent.

Jyotika Kalra, Member of the rights panel, said, the NHRC has been very proactive in taking cognisance of complaints related to bonded labour.

She suggested that NGOs should try sending online complaints to the commission by geo-tagging photos showing bonded labour. Online complaints are easy for quick processing, monitoring and effective action to catch the culprits, she said.

Jaideep Govind, Secretary General, NHRC, said, the social and economic marginalisation of weaker sections and their inability to move out of their respective group makes them particularly vulnerable to forced labour and human trafficking.

Moreover, he said, the lack of labour regulations in the informal and unregulated sectors creates huge power imbalances in employer-worker relationships and increases workers' vulnerability to exploitation.

Ajay Tiwari, Joint Secretary, Union Ministry of Labour and Employment, said, despite efforts, there are still many challenges in the way of effective implementation of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, such as high pendency of summary trials at DM level, and concerns over double jeopardy.



BONDED LABOUR HAS TAKEN 'NEW FORMS & DIMENSIONS' SINCE ITS ABOLITION BY AN ACT 43 YEARS AGO

Letter from PM to CMs can ignite Swacch Bharat Abhiyan-like campaign against bonded labour

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: Human rights experts have suggested that a letter from the Prime Minister to chief ministers will help prioritise the issue of bonded and migrant labour. During an open house session hosted by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), participants discussed the issue and felt that the root cause of this menace lies in the agrarian crisis, which needs to be addressed on priority in the country, a senior NHRC official said on Saturday.

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