

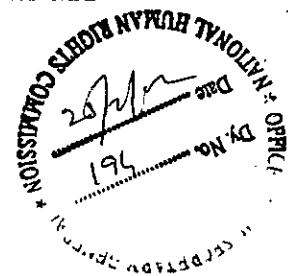
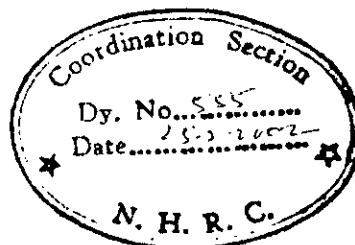
National Human Rights Commission
Sardar Patel Bhavan, New Delhi.

Report on the visit of Member (Dr. KRSJ) to the State of Andhra Pradesh from 15th to 17th February, 2002.

On 16th February, 2002, I proceeded to Karimnagar by road. The District Collector, Addl. District Collector, the District Judge, the Deputy Director (Social Welfare), the Supdt. of Police, and other officers received me in the Guest House and immediately thereafter, we proceeded to the Conference Hall in the Collectorate.

In the briefing given by the Government officers, it was mentioned that in the survey conducted upto 28.3.2001, 81 bonded labourers were identified in the Karimnagar district and from March 29, 2001 to April 24, 2001, another 66 bonded labourers had been identified. In the briefing by Smt. Sumita Dawra, District Collector, presented that a total number of bonded labourers identified in each of the years mentioned therein, came to 249. For rehabilitation, 248 cases have been sanctioned and 231 have been grounded since 17 of them died in the meanwhile. It was also stated that Vigilance Committees for the district and also Karimnagar, Sircilla, Manthani and Peddapalli divisions have been constituted. 2, 7, 3 and 1 respectively the meetings at the division level had been conducted. One cooperative society has been formed. A sum of Rs.36.55 lakh has been sanctioned for their rehabilitation. As was mentioned, cooperative society for 52 relieved bonded labourers of Ibrahimipalli and Chintahane villages from Karimnagar Mandal was registered on February 17, 2001, and the Government has released a sum of Rs.9,10,088/- for their rehabilitation on purchasing the land for distribution among them. The details have been given in the enclosure. A detailed interaction with the nodal revenue divisional officers was conducted. They have shared their personal experiences. Among the divisional officers, the R.D.O., Karimnagar appears to be a very committed officer who has informally interacted with the bonded labourers by meeting them in their localities, took them into confidence and explained to them about his visit for identification of bonded labour, etc. He had also shared his experiences on identifying the child labour working in road construction. The parents refused to hand over the children for being rehabilitated, despite his giving an undertaking that he would be personally responsible to look after them. When he went again with Police assistance, the children were whisked away and could not be traced out. Similar experiences also have been mentioned with regard to the girl children working as labourers or engaged in household duties. The Collector also had explained that in June-July, 2001, they had identified as many as 3,950 children working in hazardous industries, like bidi-rolling, and 16,000 children in non-hazardous industries. She also mentioned that in total, including non-school going children, 1 lakh children had been identified as child labourers.

Brick kiln industries existed in Peddapalli division, Sultanabad and other areas. Nine brick-kiln industries had existed in Peddapalli division. The R.D.O. has given the details of the labourers working in those kilns. A total of 403 workers are engaged in the kiln industry. Many of them are migrants from Orissa. When I queried whether he had



undertaken minute examination of the records of the payment of the minimum wages to them, the R.D.O. admitted that he did not carry out the requisite details to find out whether the bonded labourers are being paid the minimum wages. However, he promised to immediately do the needful and take appropriate action.

They have been organising 50 NCLP schools and in each school, 50 students are taught the bridge courses. Some of them are being run by NGOs and others under the Government supervision. About 2,500 students are now studying the bridge courses. The District Collector has taken special interest in the education sector of children and she also has periodically been visiting personally the schools to supervise whether teaching is being imparted on the expected lines.

After the meeting, I made a surprise visit to one of the schools and interacted with the student child labourers. Within a short span of six months, almost all the female child labourer students gained self-confidence and have shown keen interest in further studies. In different classes, different students expressed their ambition of life – one of them wished to be a District Collector, another to be a Judge, and yet another, to be a doctor and one of them as a teacher, and so on. Their articulation is also very commendable. Some girl children are being taught vocational training in making ladies hand-bags. I have examined the quality of their finished products. They are certainly on par with the professional and commercial quality available in the market, which indicates that given the opportunity, these child labourers would prove to be more efficient and improve excellence in their vocational skills. The District Collector has allotted a very decent building for boarding and lodging of these girl children in the outskirts of Karimnagar District Headquarters.

I have also instructed the officers to continue identification of bonded labourers involving the civil society and put accountability on the Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayats in each of the areas. There should not be any gap between the release and rehabilitation. The release should be on passing a proceeding under Section 6 of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act and their rehabilitation should be undertaken simultaneously. Where more than 5 or 6 bonded labourers in a village are identified, a cooperative society should be formed. The works under the minimum employment guarantee scheme should be allotted to the cooperative society. An amount of Rs.20,000/- be given for rehabilitation – Rs.1000/- may be paid in cash, and the balance of Rs.19,000/- be credited in the form of share capital in the name of the released bonded labourers as a member of the cooperative society. Where they are willing for land, the Government land may be allotted. In case it is not forthcoming, the land may be purchased and given to the members but the pattas should be given in the name of the wife of the bonded labourer. Though pattas are given in individual names, every effort should be made to organise collective farming, fixing accountability on the Assistant Agriculture Officer to impart education in agricultural operations to the member to reap higher productivity and yield. The value of a part of the produce may be paid to liquidate the loan and a handful may be kept out of the earnings so that it could be used for further development or further acquisition in due course and the balance amount would be shared by the members of the cooperative society. The Assistant Agriculture Officer should be

accountable for successful agricultural operations by the members of the cooperative society.

The Superintendent of Police, Shri R.S. Praveen Kumar, has taken up a unique experiment of involving the civil society to ensure that the teachers and the doctors remained in the village to impart education to the students and to look after their parents. He organized a scheme, viz., 'Development Yagna' in the interior village. In each Mandal, he adopted two villages and with the participation of the civil society, teachers and doctors are being treated as their ideals, providing them free accommodation, free provisions, etc. As a consequence, the number of drop-outs in the schools has come down considerably. The patients are not driven to go to the urban areas for treatment. The influence of the experiences is being weaned away. He also has been organising to educate the extremists and making them surrender. The District Collector and the Supdt. of Police have been doing good service in the district, apart from the other duties assigned to them. I have mentioned to the District Collector that the rehabilitation scheme of the bonded labourers would be continuously monitored, which she has promised to do.

In one of the schools, the ZPTE member, along with a reporter of the local newspaper and two others, during night at about 10.00 p.m., barged into the hostel in a durnken state, banged the doors and created terror among the girl children. As a result, one teacher and some students fled away. The District Collector has taken stern action against the delinquents. The defence purported to find womanising in the hostel and to prevent such incidents, after a disciplinary action was taken, K. Ramachandran, Member, S.P.T.E. filed a writ petition No. 26386/2001 and obtained suspension of the Warden on 27th December, 2001. The District Collector requested me to take up the matter to ensure that the writ petition is successfully defended by a person nominated by the N.H.R.C. She also suggested that she inculcated confidence among the inmates and told them not to get frightened and in order to prevent recurrence of such incidents, she requested that effective steps were to be taken for early disposal of the writ petition and successfully defending the action taken by her so that similar mischief would not recur. I am of the opinion that our Commission may request one of the Advocates in the High Court of Andhra Pradesh to intervene on behalf of the N.H.R.C.

With that note, the meeting came to be concluded.


(Justice Dr. K. Ramaswamy)
Member

Secretary General