

NATIONAL

## NHRC notice to Delhi govt. over bonded labour

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### A total of 26 boys were rescued from a denim manufacturing unit last month

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Friday issued a notice to the Delhi government and the Delhi Police over reports of 26 boys found working as bonded labourers at a factory in north-east Delhi's Seelampur.

According to media reports, the boys, aged between eight and 13 years, were rescued from bonded labour at a jeans factory last month.

The job of the children was to cut threads of denim and pack it.

#### Hit with hammer

"The task was to pack 10 pieces of the cloth item in 10 minutes and the one who finished last would be beaten up with a hammer by the employer.

The victims were forced to work for 22 hours a day," the NHRC said.

The children would also be allegedly hit if caught dozing off or visiting toilets during work hours.

"Due to lengthy sittings, many of them are not able to walk properly. Injury marks were found on their bodies and one of them could not even open his eyes in the sunlight," the Commission said.

The rescued boys were all from Bihar's Motihari district and had been brought to the Capital about six months ago. They may have been victims of trafficking.

#### Reports sought

Taking suo motu cognisance of the reports, the NHRC issued a notice to Delhi Chief Secretary M.M. Kutty and Police Commissioner Amulya Patnaik, asking for reports within four weeks. They were asked to inform the Commission about the steps taken for the rehabilitation of the children as well as the action initiated against the employer.

The NHRC said the human rights of the victims had been violated, both by the employer and the government. The Commission also observed that the police and the government had been unable to curb the practice of bonded labour.

The victims are currently living at Mukti Ashram, a children's home run by Bachpan Bachao Andolan, an NGO headed by Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi.

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