

UP govt increases relief for bonded labourers from Rs 5k to Rs 20k

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BAREILLY: In a letter to all district magistrates, Uttar Pradesh chief secretary has asked them to crack down on brick-kilns which employ bonded labourers and register FIRs against them. The state government also revised the compensation for bonded labourers from Rs 5,000 to Rs 20,000.

In his letter to all DMs, chief secretary Rahul Bhatnagar said, "During review of problems related to the bonded labour, it came to light that there is a keen need of effective action to deal with the problem in every district. Sadly, it also came to (our) knowledge that in case where bonded labourers were freed, no FIR was lodged against the perpetrators.

Moreover, in those cases where FIR was lodged, no chargesheet is produced in the court timely. Summary trials in bonded labourers' cases have been pending for a long while resulting in negligible instances of conviction and sentencing." He added that the National Human Rights Commission had also showed its deep concern over such lackadaisical approach of the administration.

Bhatnagar said that it is the duty of the DM to enforce the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1976 to resolve issues related to bonded labourers in his district.

The chief secretary instructed officials to provide immediate relief of Rs 20,000, against the earlier Rs 5,000, to the rescued

labourers. The officials have been instructed to hold monthly review meetings and ensure that the chargesheets are filed in courts timely. They have also been asked to send an action taken report to the labour commission latest by 5th of every month.

India abolished bonded labour in 1976, but the country is home to almost half the world's 36 million slaves. Many are from poor rural areas and are lured with the promise of good jobs, but end up sold into domestic work, prostitution, or to brick kilns, textile units and farms. Rescued bonded labourers often face delays in receiving compensation and trial to bring perpetrators to justice can be bogged down by varying laws in different states.