

DAWN

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Plan to abolish bonded Labour at brick kilns

By Our Reporter

LAHORE, Aug 27: A Rs. 150 million project is being launched to eliminate bonded labour from brick kilns in Lahore and Kasur districts, a top Punjab government official said here on Wednesday.

Speaking at a workshop on "Employers' Code of Conduct for Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour" organized by the Employers' Federation of Pakistan, Punjab Labour and Human Resource Secretary Muhammad Ali Gardezi said bonded labour was one of the

worst forms of child labour and the government had decided to eliminate it. Under the planned project, poor people would be provided education, microfinance, social services, legal protection and they would be mobilized against the menace.

Gardezi said the code of conduct developed by the Employers' Federation of Pakistan would add a new dimension to the fight against the child labour. Similar codes would be developed for other

sectors where child labour was an issue. The government would ask the International Labour Organization to carry research in such sectors to assess the situation and develop guidelines for the employment of young workers.

The secretary said the Punjab government had setup a Child Protection Bureau to help the poor, destitute and abandoned children. Bureau branches in Lahore and Gujranwala were playing a role in the recovery of abandoned

and deprived children from criminal gangs. As many as 2,000 children have been recovered since the launch of the initiative, and rehabilitated. As many as 1,800 children have been returned to their parents, 17 gangs involved in forcing the children into beggary have been smashed and 26 cases have been registered against these gangs.

Similarly, 315 children used in camel races in Gulf states have been recovered and the government is implementing a programme to provide them health, education, training and accommodation.

Project Coordinator Syed Saud Alam said surgical, bangles, mines and rag picking sectors have been selected for elimination of worst forms of child labour. Ten model units have been set up to make bangle manufacture safe for workers.

International Labour Organization representative Sujeewa Fonseka said poverty forced the parents to turn their children into

labourers. Adults lost their jobs because of child workers. He said employers of 86 countries were taking interest in the elimination of child labour and employers of 50 countries in elimination of worst forms of child labour.

Pakistan is the only country in Asia which has identified six sectors for elimination of worst forms of child labour.

Pakistan Workers Federation Deputy Secretary General Osama Tariq said guidelines for elimination of worst forms of child labour should be published in Urdu and widely circulated. The guidelines should be displayed on signboards in the areas where such labour existed.

Kasur Tanneries Association Executive member Zarrar Amin said the child labour had been eliminated from tanneries in Kasur. He said the association cancelled the

membership of tanneries involved in employment of child labourers. Rag Picking Association Chairman Muhammad Tufail said the association had made arrangements for the education of 270 children.

**The Urdu Version of the same is already published, later on disbursed to all stakeholders.*