



## Bonded Labour System in India

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### Why in News

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Recently, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) conducted a seminar on “**bonded labour**”.

According to International Labour Organization(ILO) there are 1.17 crores bonded labourers in India (2014).

### Reasons for the Persistence of Bonded Labour

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1. The **lack of awareness among workers and employers**
2. **Low conviction rates**
3. Social bias towards bonded labour
4. **Migratory nature** of bonded labour
5. Weaker implementation of Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1976.

### Bonded Labour

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- It is a practice in which employers **give high-interest loans** to workers who **work at low wages to pay off the debt.**
- The Supreme Court of India has interpreted bonded labour as the payment of wages that are below the prevailing market wages and legal minimum wages.
- The **Constitution of India prohibits** forced labour under **Article 23 (Fundamental Rights).**
  - Article 23:** Prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour.
- Bonded labour was historically associated with rural economies where peasants from economically disadvantaged communities were bound to work for the landlords.
- Bonded labour is found to exist in both rural and urban pockets in unorganized industries such as brick kilns, stone quarries, coal mining, agricultural labour, domestic servitude, circus, and sexual slavery.

## **Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1976**

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- The Act extends to the **whole of India but implemented by respective state governments.**
- It provides for an institutional mechanism at the district level in the form of Vigilance Committees.  
Vigilance committees advise District Magistrate(DM) to ensure the provisions of this act are properly implemented.
- The State Governments/UTs may confer, on an Executive Magistrate, the powers of a Judicial Magistrate of the first class or second class for the trial of offences under this Act.

## **Central Sector Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Labourers (2016)**

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Under this scheme financial assistance to the extent of Rs.Three lakhs is provided to released bonded labourers along with other non-cash assistance for their livelihood.

Source: TH