

New panel to free bonded labourers

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GURUGRAM: Four years after the expiry of the tenure of the vigilance committee for bonded labourers, the district administration is planning to reconstitute it. The move comes following a letter from additional chief secretary (ACS) of Haryana labour department Vijay Vardhan to district magistrate Hardeep Singh.

Vardhan's letter dated January 19, 2016, points out that the Supreme Court had entrusted the work of monitoring the implementation of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976 on the district administration. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the letter reads, has observed that Gurgaon has not maintained records of

bonded labourers who have been freed and benefits provided to them. The ACS has asked the district magistrate (DM) to comply with the Act and submit a report to the SC panel.

The district vigilance committee (DVC), which is supposed to give a half yearly report, has been lying defunct since 2012, which is the reason behind the records not being updated. The records are to be maintained for the name and address of the bonded labourer, statistics relating to the vocation, occupation and income of every freed bonded labourer, a register containing details of cases under the Act. The district administration has to submit the report before the SC in the seminar on bonded labourer to be held later this month in Delhi.

The DM has called a meeting of all relevant officials to constitute a fresh vigilance committee. According to the rules, the panel,

including the DM as its chairman, has to have 11 members – three members from the SC or ST communities, two social workers, three from rural development agencies, one from financial or credit institutions and a labour department official who is ex-officio member-secretary of the DVC. "We have written to DCP , additional labour commissioner, district food and supplies controller and sub-divisional officer to hold a meet," Hardeep Singh said.