

Punjab to ban domestic workers under 15

LAHORE: The provincial government informed the Lahore High Court on Thursday the draft of 'Punjab Domestic Workers Bill of 2018' had been finalised that carried a ban on children below age of 15 years to work as domestic worker.

Assistant Advocate General Rai Shahid Saleem also presented a copy of the bill draft before the court during hearing of a public interest petition moved by advocate Sheraz Zaka.

The law officer said under the new legislation no child under the age of 15 years shall be allowed to work in household in any capacity and domestic workers shall not be employed under bonded labour system. He said the legislation was first of its kind by a province.

He said an employer, if failed to comply with provisions of the law or abuse a worker, shall, on conviction, be punishable with fine or imprisonment for a term, which may extend to one month if he engaged a child below the age of 12 years and in case of a child under 15 years by fine which may extend to Rs50,000 but shall not be less than Rs10,000.

Every employment or appointment of a domestic worker shall be subject to issuance of letter of employment in a prescribed 'Form' showing terms and conditions of employment, including the nature of work and amount of wages etc.

Moreover, the law officer said that as part of the proposed bill, domestic workers' shifts will be limited to eight hours, whereas special courts and committees will be formed to resolve their problems. He said the bill will soon be passed by the Punjab Assembly.

Justice Jawad Hassan appreciated the fact the wages of the domestic workers would be notified by the government on a par with workers of commercial organisations. The judge directed the law officer to submit progress report on the matter after the bill passed by the assembly.

Advocate Zaka pleaded that domestic workers had been unduly discriminated and subjected to torture. He sought court's direction for the government to make legislation to protect rights of the domestic workers.

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