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Activists Raise Concerns Over Treatment of Migrant Workers from Bengal in BJP-Governed States

July 30, 2025

– Categories: Human Rights



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A group of civil society leaders in Kolkata has raised alarms about the alleged mistreatment of Bengali-speaking migrant workers in various Indian states. Reports include claims of police harassment, unlawful detention, and lack of institutional support, particularly in areas governed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Speaking at a recent forum hosted by Sangbidhan Bachao Desh Bachao Manch (translated as *Save the Constitution, Save the Country Platform*), speakers emphasized the need for better protections and oversight for workers from West Bengal who relocate in search of jobs. The event drew attention to what they called an emerging pattern of discrimination against migrant laborers from the eastern state.

Harsh Mander, a former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer and longtime advocate for civil rights, stated that Bengali workers had faced abuse and illegal detention by local authorities in cities like Gurgaon (Haryana), Jaipur (Rajasthan), Ahmedabad (Gujarat), and parts of Odisha. According to Mander, such treatment undermines citizens' constitutional right to live and work anywhere in the country. He suggested that political interests in West Bengal appear to contradict how migrant workers are treated in some other regions.

Nadeem Khan, co-founder of the Association for Protection of Civil Rights (APCR), echoed these concerns. After visiting several areas where Bengali-speaking workers are employed, Khan observed that many lack access to mobile phones, legal aid, or awareness of their rights under Indian law. He called on the West Bengal government to send a fact-finding delegation of Members of Parliament (MPs) to document conditions firsthand.

Masiur Rahman, president of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind in West Bengal, proposed a more structured approach, urging the creation of a centralized registry and dedicated officers to monitor and assist workers from the state employed across the country. Such a framework, he argued, would provide a layer of accountability and help prevent future incidents.

In response to growing concerns, the West Bengal state government has introduced a helpline intended to aid workers facing challenges in other regions and facilitate safe returns when necessary. While the initiative has been welcomed, activists are urging authorities to strengthen legal mechanisms and improve interstate coordination to ensure that no Indian citizen is subject to discrimination based on their regional background.

The situation underscores a broader conversation on internal migration and labor mobility in India. As economic disparities continue to drive large-scale movement between states, both local and national governments face increasing pressure to ensure equal treatment and basic rights for all Indian workers, regardless of where they come from.