

Stick to labour laws in Asiad work, says court

By Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI, May 12: The supreme court yesterday ordered the authorities concerned with the construction of various Asiad projects to ensure that workers get minimum wages, children below 14 are not employed as labourers and other labour welfare measures are not flouted to the detriment of workers.

Mr. Justice P. N. Bhagwati and Mr. Justice D. A. Desai also directed the Union government, the Delhi administration and the Delhi Development Authority to carry out weekly inspections to see no law was violated and submit reports to the court.

The authorities have also been directed to launch prosecution against the building and other contractors found to violate the law.

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Disposing of the writ petition filed by the people's union for democratic rights to draw attention of the court to the plight of the labour and violation of the labour welfare legislation, the court made it clear that if any commission was required to be paid by the contractors to jamadars who brought the labour, it should be paid by them from their pocket.

It should not in any manner be deducted from the wages of labourers. The court also appointed a three-man team to act as Ombudsman for watching and protecting the interest of ASIAD workers and ensuring the observance of laws by the contractors.

The team comprises Mr. Walter Fernandes and Mr. Alfred D'Souza, directors of the Indian Social Institute, and Mr. Das Gupta, director, People's Institute for Development and Training.

The three directors too have been

asked to submit weekly reports to the court after visiting the sites and making detailed inquiries. If, as a result of these reports, it is found that the labour laws have been violated and no action has been taken by the concerned authorities, the petitioner will be at liberty to apply for necessary relief by having the writ petition posted on board for directions, the court said.

The various laws, observance of which the authorities are to ensure, according to the order, are the contract labour act, the minimum wages act, the equal remuneration act, the employment of children act and the inter-state migrant workmen act.

The authorities and the contractors were also directed to extend all facilities and full co-operation to the members of the team when they visit the construction sites.

The court, which would give its reasoned judgment for the order later, expressed gratitude to Mr. Gobind Mukhoty, PUDR chairman, for having assisted the court in bringing relief to the Asiad workers.