

NGO protests against child labour in Banaskantha

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PALANPUR: At least 300 activists of Buniyadi Adhikar Andolan Gujarat (BAAG), Ahmedabad, submitted a memorandum to Banaskantha district collector on Monday, protesting against child labour in BT cotton farms in the district. BAAG convener Jayanti Makwana and others, in the memorandum, said that a large number of tribal children below the age of 14, from various districts of Gujarat, have been forced into hard labour in BT cotton fields across the state.

"Our teams had been to BT cotton farms in Kutch, Mehsana, Bhavnagar, Patan, Banaskantha and Vadodara. We were taken aback at the treatment meted out to the children," Makwana said, adding that even minor girls are being made to slog in farms. They are paid little over Rs 70 a day, including the agent's commission of Rs 10, he said.

"Poor implementation of the Right to Education Act, lack of opportunities and schools, and other such factors compel these children from poor homes to engage in agricultural activities," he added.

Meanwhile, labour officer PJ Joshi refuted the charges. "This year, in coordination with the revenue department, we had formed 13 special teams and raided the cotton farms in Kankrej and Deodar. We were vigilant since July to the end of the season, and, therefore, no labour including, children and adults, came from Rajasthan this year. The tribals working in the fields are above 18 but look minor because of genetic problem."

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