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Title: Need to take steps to curb the practice of Child labour in the Country.

SHRI SUNIL KHAN (DURGAPUR): With credible estimates ranging from 60 to 115 million, India has the largest number of working children in the world. Whether they are sweating in the heat of stone quarries, working in the fields sixteen hours a day, picking rags in city streets, or hidden away as domestic servants, these children endure miserable and difficult lives. They earn little and are abused much. They struggle to make enough to eat and perhaps to help feed their families as well. They do not go to school; more than half of them will never learn the barest skills of literacy. Many of them have been working since the age of four or five, and by the time they reach adulthood they may be irrevocably sick or deformed-they will certainly be exhausted, old men and women by the age of forty, likely to be dead by fifty. Most or all of these children are working under some form of compulsion, whether from their parents, from the expectations attached to their caste, or from simple economic necessity. At least fifteen million of them, however, are working virtual slaves and these are the bonded child labourers of India. This report is about them. "Bonded child labour" refers to the phenomenon of children working in conditions of servitude in order to pay off a debt. The debt that binds them to their employer is incurred not by the children themselves, but by their relatives or guardians-usually by a parent. In India, these debts tend to be relatively modest, ranging on average from 500 rupees to 7,500 rupees depending on the industry and the age and skill of the child. The creditors-cum-employers offer these "loans" to destitute parents in an effort to secure the labour of a child, which is always cheap, but even cheaper under a situation of bondage. The parents, for their part, accept the loans. Bondage is a traditional worker-employer relationship in India, and the parents need the money-perhaps to pay for the costs of an illness, perhaps to provide a dowry to a marrying child, or perhaps-as is often the case-to help put food on the table. Supreme Court of India in its Judgment dated 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1996 in writ petition (Civil) No. 465/1986 that simultaneous action in all district of the country, withdrawal of children working in hazardous industries, contribution of Rs. 20, 000/ per child to a welfare fund to be established for the purpose.

I urge upon the Government to follow the Supreme Court orders.