

ILO defends report on 'modern slavery'

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has defended its recent report on “modern slavery” after the Union government questioned the authenticity of its estimates last week.

The ILO, which produced the report titled ‘Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage 2017’ along with Australia-based Walk Free Foundation (WFF), said that it doesn’t focus on specific countries but provides a global picture.

“The estimates in the report do not focus on any one country but instead provide global and regional pictures of the situation,” an ILO spokesperson said in an e-mail to *The Hindu* .

Although country-wise figures were not mentioned in the 2017 ILO-WFF report, the study showed that 40.3 million people were victims of ‘modern slavery’ in 2016.

“The ILO does not recommend using these estimates to generate national statistics; however the ILO encourages member-states to implement their own national surveys for which the ILO can provide tested tools and technical support upon request,” the ILO said.

Union Labour and Employment Secretary M. Sathiyavathy had written a letter to ILO Director General Guy Ryder on October 4 saying “neither the Central government was consulted before the study nor its credibility has been established.”

“We would like to know the basis on which the data has been verified for credibility when apparently it has been neither verified with any official data source, including that of ILO nor any national governments have been consulted regarding the survey methodology,” the letter said.

IB missive

The Labour and Employment Ministry’s rebuttal came following a missive from the Intelligence Bureau (IB) asking the government to counter multiple international organisations on reports about slavery in India that can hurt India’s image and exports.

The Centre is exploring a rebuttal at an international level through consultations with the Ministry of External Affairs and other departments. The Labour and Employment Ministry is also planning to conduct its own surveys on bonded labour in a bid to counter various estimates by private agencies.

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