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Swami Agnivesh seeks creation of STF to tackle bonded labour in MP

- HT Correspondent & PTI, Hindustan Times, Bhopal
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Swami Agnivesh addressing a rally of bonded labourers in Bhopal on Monday. (Mujeeb Faruqui/ HT photo)

Social worker and Bandhua Mukti Morcha's national president Swami Agnivesh on Monday demanded the constitution of a Special Task Force (STF) to end the problem of bonded labour in Madhya Pradesh. He said nearly 1,000 tribal labourers would take out a rally in Bhopal on Tuesday from different roads of the city and stage a sit-in protest at Neelam Park.

Agnivesh said the practice of bonded labour is still going on under the nose of Madhya Pradesh government even though a law to end it was framed in 1976. The activist said he has handed over a list of 450 people of Saharia tribe of the state, who were working as bonded laborers, to the Guna district Collector.

He claimed to have written to chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and the administration a number of times on the issue, and that no discussion had taken place yet on the issue.

"People are forced to work as bonded labourers on their own land for generations since last 20-25 years and moneylenders were recovering interests from them at the rate of 15-20%," Agnivesh told reporters in Bhopal, during a programme on the issue.

Agnivesh said he has also drawn the attention of Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi and Guna MP and senior Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia on the issue of bonded labourers in Scindia's constituency. Both leaders have assured they would raise the issue in Parliament, he said.

He also alleged that attempts were being made by the ABVP, RSS and BJP to defame the "highest traditions of JNU" as their student's wing was defeated in the campus elections.

"The attempts being made by responsible leaders of Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad, RSS and BJP to defame highest traditions of JNU are highly condemnable. It was being done as ABVP lost to Kanhaiya Kumar (JNUSU president). It is totally wrong and such dirty acts should not have any place in politics," he said.