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Saturday , August 19, 2006

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## PAGE ONE

### 'I need work...don't know of law banning it'

*Sent to 'rehab home' after rash of raids, 'rescued' child labourers stare at a void*

**Chitragada Choudhary**

**August 18:** Child labour, banned by law since 1986, is ubiquitous in our cities.

In August, there was yet another official promise to alter India's dubious distinction as housing the world's largest number of child labourers—over 11 million by official estimates—when the Centre said that from October 10, no child below 14 could be employed as a domestic or in an eating place.

But the stories of child labourers—69 of the 200-odd children rounded up by the police last week are housed in the Dongri Children's Home—who arrived in Mumbai through the past weeks suggest that for those at the centre of it all, there is no easy way out of work.

The children have been presented before the state's Child Welfare Committee through the past two days. Some have already been handed over to their parents. Others from states outside will be sent back accompanied by a police constable.

**Asha Bajpai, professor, Tata Institute of Social Sciences,** argues that raids won't end the problem. "Announcing a ban is fine, but we haven't heard anything from the government on how they are going to implement it. Let us assess the children's aptitude and capability and focus on implementing their fundamental right to education without wasting time."

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