

BIG STORY

big story

Can't pay? Won't pay!

Hundreds of labourers in the construction sector continue to struggle without salaries and access to basic living conditions

● The unionists are finding it difficult to have a proper communication channel with these workers as they don't belong to any trade unions.

● Though Tribune made efforts to contact the employers of these workers, they could not be reached.

TDT|Manama
Harpreet Kaur

A large number of expat workers are facing extreme financial situations due to unpaid wages mainly in the construction sector, according to sources.

In June, workers of two contracting companies staged separate protests over unpaid salaries. They also marched towards the Labour Court demanding strict action from the part of authorities.

Speaking to Tribune, a labourer employed by a contracting company, said, "We, a group of 120 labourers, working at a construction site in Zallaq, haven't been paid for almost a year now."

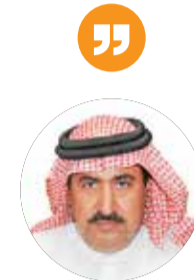
"We worked for over 16 hours a day to complete various projects on time, but never received any money for our hard work."

He said there are many in the group who don't even have proper visas. "The company kept on telling us that our dues would be paid. But nothing happens. We are stuck in the Kingdom with no food to eat."

The labourer said most often company officials don't give proper response to their pleas.



Workers say they are often made to work over 15 hours a day.



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We ask all labourers who have disputes with their companies to come to Labour Court and file a petition so that we can take it up.

MR AL DOSARI



The Kingdom has strict labour laws but many a time workers fail to report their cases to the ministry out of fear or other reasons.

Another labourer, an Indian expat said, back home the families of labourers are living in extreme poverty.

"We would work in extremely tough conditions and at times we only got 15 minutes of lunch break. I lost my son a few months back. Neither could I visit my home nor I had the money to pay for his medical bills," he lamented.

"We are left here with no money and no food." Though Tribune made efforts to contact the employers of these workers, they could not be reached.

Though the trade unions in the Kingdom pledged support to labourers, who work allegedly without being paid in the Kingdom, the unionists are finding it difficult to have a proper communication channel with these workers as they don't belong to any trade unions.

"Only two companies in the construction sector are unionised. How can we address the issues faced by these workers?" General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions (GFBTU) assistant secretary for international relations, Karim Radhi was quoted by Tribune earlier.

"There is no proper communication channel between the labourers and the companies. When companies are unionised, both parties can sit together and discuss the problems and try to find a way out of it," he had said.

Speaking to Tribune, Labour Ministry Undersecretary Sabah Al Dosari said the ministry is constantly in the process of helping workers who are in need. "We ask all labourers who have disputes with their companies to come to Labour Court and file a petition so that we can take it up."

"We are now dealing with a few cases involving unpaid wages. The ministry is hopeful that these issues could be solved by taking up the cases with the managements of these companies."

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I lost my son a few months back. Neither could I visit my home nor I had the money to pay for his medical bills.

A WORKER

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A slip showing the working hours of a construction labourer.

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