

NATIONAL

# Indian worker dies in Bahrain during protest

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Bahrain and India held urgent consultations after a large protest by Indian workers in Manama on Sunday turned violent, leaving one worker dead and an unknown number injured.

Minister of State for External Affairs V.K. Singh met with Bahraini Ministers in Manama to defuse the situation.

“The Indian worker died during a protest by over 200 Indian workers for payment of salary,” a highly placed diplomatic source confirmed to *The Hindu*.

‘Died of natural causes’

Bahrain, however, refused to acknowledge that the death was due to the police action against workers who began protesting around noon on Sunday.

“Police and Bahraini authorities have said that the Indian national died of natural causes,” the official told *The Hindu*, explaining that non-payment of dues and salaries was the main issue behind the protest.

Though reports of unrest among Indian workers in Bahrain have been circulating in various social media platforms for sometime, Sunday’s violence was a clear indication of the seriousness of the situation. The disturbance in Bahrain is significant as it came less than a week after India celebrated the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas honouring the Indians abroad where a large contingent of Indians from the Gulf region had participated.

The police crackdown added to the tense situation in Bahrain which has witnessed sectarian unrest following the hanging of a few leading detainees. Sunday’s protest is the first since Indian workers faced starvation due to non-payment of salaries in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in July 2016, which prompted External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj to declare remedial measures.

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Minister of State for External Affairs V.K. Singh's visit to Bahrain coincided with the Pongal celebration among expat workers in the Arab country.



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