

Conservancy workers call for hike in wages

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CHENNAI: Hundreds of city conservancy workers continued their overnight protest at the Ripon Building on Thursday alleging they were being paid only a paltry Rs 250 as daily wage.

Over 2,000 workers assembled in the corporation headquarters on Wednesday and taking a cue from pro-Jallikattu protestors, they stayed put overnight. Their other demands included a weekly off without deduction of pay and provident fund.

As the workers continued their sit-in protest for the second day, officials pacified them. They later dispersed.

A year ago, conservancy workers, both permanent and on contract, staged a similar protest. However, the workers said none of their demands were met. Hence, they were forced to stage a protest again now.

“Although according to the Collector’s order the recommended daily wage was Rs 320, they now get only around Rs 250,” said P Srinivasan, general secretary, Chennai Corporation Red Flag Union, that leads the protest.

The workers said on Wednesday they would continue with the protest until their demands were met

“Around 1,800 workers stayed here overnight. On Thursday morning, about 3,000 workers gathered here. None of them turned up for work,” said Srinivasan.

According to a worker, who did not want to be identified, without benefits such as ESI and Provident Fund, the wages even if raised to Rs 320 would barely meet the expenses such as medical bills. Mohan R, a conservancy worker on contract, said another important demand was regularisation of those coming under non-muster rolls.

According to Srinivasan, officials had sought a fortnight’s time. “But, keeping in mind the political climate at the moment, we gave them three months time as long as they gave an assurance that our demands will certainly be met within this period,” he said.