

2,000 unpaid Indian workers stranded in Kuwait

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HYDERABAD: With no food to eat or even a blanket to cover themselves with, about 2,000 Indian workers are suffering in Kuwait as they have not been paid wages by the company they have been working for more than a year now. In despair, many are contemplating suicide.

The workers who are from different parts of India, including Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, are in a piquant situation. Their visas have expired while waiting for the infrastructure company — Kharafi National — to settle the issue, which has not happened. They are even unable to go to hospitals in sickness as their stay has become illegal and if caught, they will be imprisoned.

Restive workers of Kharafi National, a construction company in Kuwait, have been protesting day and night before the company office demanding they be given their due salaries and sent back to India.

"I can only think of suicide. I haven't been paid for the last 10 months and my stay here has become illegal. I have a lot of debts to repay in India," said Naresh Naidu, a worker. The workers said that the company told them it was not in a position to pay salaries as it doesn't have projects to execute.

IN TANGLED WEB OF BROKEN DREAMS

3,242 Indian workers at Kharafi National not getting salaries



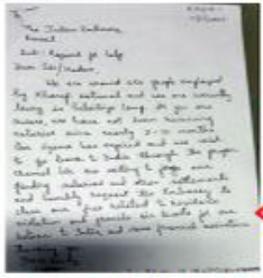
45 Workers camping outside office for last 10 days

250 Workers willing to forego salary dues to return to India immediately

WORKERS FROM...

Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

List handed over to Kuwait authorities on Oct 1, 2017



Letter by workers to the Indian embassy

Workers protest outside Kharafi National office

WHAT COMPANY SAYS
Can't pay due to lack of projects

"I can only think of suicide. I have not been paid for the last 10 months and my stay here has already become illegal. I have a lot of debts to repay in India"

Naresh Naidu
AGGRIEVED WORKER

LONG-DRAWN WOES

> Workers have not been paid salaries for 10-12 months

> Many resigned expecting the company will settle their dues, but to no avail

CAN'T RETURN TO INDIA

> PASSPORTS OF MOST WORKERS IS WITH THE COMPANY

> Visas expired during the wait period, making them all illegal residents in Kuwait

> Overstaying attracts fine, making a worker liable to pay ₹75,000 to return home

CAN'T STAY EITHER

> Workers camping at office as their accommodation is 60km away and they cannot travel daily to make their pleas

> No blanket or sleeping arrangements. Food being provided by local gurudwara after social worker intervened

> Workers unable to go to hospitals for treatment fearing arrest for overstaying in country

"We will definitely help them"

M C Luther
PROTECTOR GENERAL OF INDIA

As many as 45 workers are demonstrating before the office, carrying placards. The company has put them up in a camp, which is 60km away from office. "We do not have money to travel daily to the office to plead our case. The only thing we can do is sit here, sleep here and wait till our plea is considered. But no one seems to be bothered," said 42-year-old Irfan Ahmed.

Moved by their plight, Shayeen Sayeed, a social worker in Kuwait, has been trying to provide food. "We requested a local gurudwara and they have come forward to assist us. There are many workers who have become suicidal and need help. I've been counselling them against taking any extreme step," Sayeed told TOI on Tuesday.

The company even has the workers' passports, due to which they can't leave Kuwait even if they decide to forego the dues. With the expiry of their visas, they also have to pay a fine for overstaying. "If I have to return home, I will have to pay □75,000 as fine. Where will I get it from? And if police arrest me for overstaying, I won't ever be able to return to Kuwait for work," said another worker.