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Stranded Indian workers seek help from activists back home

FMT Reporters

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PETALING JAYA: Forty-four migrant workers from India are stranded in Malaysia after they were allegedly duped into coming into the country to be employed by a local firm.

They claimed they had not been paid what they were promised.

Indian media and social activists were alerted when the workers posted a video in a WhatsApp group meant for migrants. They appealed to the group administrator to rescue them.

The eNewsroom news portal reported today that the men were from the eastern Indian states of Bengal and Jharkhand.

They are now staying in a cell for labourers managed by the Indian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, where they had sought help.

The news portal said the workers had contacted activists in Jharkhand to complain about being subjected to inhumane living conditions in the cell.

They alleged that at times even the water supply was cut off and they had to buy water with their own money.

“Even after being in the embassy (high commission) for over 25 days, nobody has informed us about any development.

“We have no idea what is going on,” Bhim Mahto, one of the affected workers, was quoted as saying in a WhatsApp interview with eNewsroom.

According to the report, the men had been hired by a Malaysian engineering and construction company 11 months ago.

Some time after they arrived and began working, they realised that they were not getting their salaries as promised under the terms of their contracts or letters of appointment.

They had been promised a monthly salary of RM1,800 each but were only getting RM900 or RM1,000. The money was also not paid on time, the report said.

They also claimed that their passports were kept by the company.

They managed to reach the high commission last month to seek help.

Mahto was quoted as saying that two among them were old employees whose visas were expiring.

“However, our company still needs to clear our dues. They owe us two to three months’ salaries,” he said.

“We do not want to work with the company, but before going to India we want our dues paid.”

According to eNewsroom, the high commission had tweeted that negotiations with the company were ongoing.

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