

big story



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Over 1,600 labour rule violations as LMRA steps up inspections

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NOUF JAMSHEER, LMRA CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Staff Reporter
TDT | Manama

More than 1,600 labour rule violations have been found by the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) which has been carrying out many inspections across the Kingdom.

It is learnt that LMRA collected BD409,000 in fines and many illegal workers were arrested. Meanwhile, 570 cases have been referred to the Public Prosecution.

Many illegal workers arrested as part of the crackdown, now face deportation proceedings. These arrested individuals were found to have committed many violations related to the provisions of the LMRA and residency laws in the Kingdom.

LMRA Chief Executive Officer Nouf Jamsheer said the authority will intensify campaigns across the Kingdom spanning worksites and worker gathering points to ensure that the labour rules are not flouted by anyone.

“The authority has carried out more than 18,000 inspection visits. It has also carried out inspection campaigns along with Nationality, Passport and Residency Affairs.” She said that 916 workers were deported after being found guilty of violating the labour laws.

The Daily Tribune earlier reported about illegal employment of expatriates, who arrive in the Kingdom on visit visas, posing a serious threat to the Kingdom’s labour sector.

According to NPRA official Talal Taqi, the crackdown will be intensified in the coming days as part of efforts to keep the labour and immigration sector safe from the violators.

Speaking to The Daily Tribune, a source closely associated with the tours and travels sector said a large number of violators of labour rules in the

Kingdom are those who have arrived under ‘one year multiple entry visa’.

“The one year multiple entry visa can be obtained by an applicant staying outside the Kingdom. The visa costs BD16 for one month and its validity is 90 days, which could be extended up to one year by exiting the country once in three months.

“Many violators would arrive in the Kingdom under this visa and approach potential employers, mainly small-scale business owners, who employ them after considering it to be a less expensive option compared to the legal LMRA channel.”

He said these small-scale business owners are now paying high prices for committing this illegal act after their workers were detained for taking up illegal employment.

Under the rules mentioned for this specific type of visa applicants, taking up paid or unpaid



A file picture shows LMRA officials carrying out an inspection.

employment is absolutely illegal. The applicants should also have BD300 with them upon entry in the Kingdom to meet their expenses.

The source said that there

are many agents in South Asian countries including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, who “trick on innocent, uneducated clients” into believing that they are buying a job visa having legal

570

cases related to illegal employment have been referred by the LMRA to the Public Prosecution.

authenticity to work under any employer in the Kingdom.

Many vulnerable youngsters from South Asian countries, who are potential jobseekers in the Kingdom, are increasingly falling victim to visa fraudsters. The Daily Tribune has learnt that under the pretext of handing over employment visas “visit visas are sold to many youngsters taking amounts ranging between BD700 and BD1,200 from them”.

False promises: workers have become the ‘prey’

Zahra Ayaz
TDT/ Manama

Many construction firms in the Kingdom are allegedly exploiting desperate illegal workers and unemployed individuals with meagre pay.

According to sources, “Illegal expatriate workers are becoming victims to the greed of construction companies and are exposed to a high-risk environmental hazard with no guarantee of safety”.

A source said that construction companies are also finding this a golden opportunity to cut down their expenses, as they are not liable to pay any compensation for the casualties at the workplace.

An illegal Asian worker said:

“We cannot raise our claim since we are unlawful workers. Most of us are scared to file a case realising that this will backfire on us. Instead of getting compensation, we may get fined or deported for accepting such an illegal job offer.”

“Most of these companies are well aware of the pathetic situation of these labourers, and they are pretty sure about their inability to raise their voice legally in the court, which makes the situation worse.”

One of the sources working in a senior position in the same industry said: “Some companies make them work only during the daytime, while others force them to work even at night with no overtime benefits!”

Ministry of Labour and Labour Market regulatory Au-



thority is very keen on protecting the rights of the employees, and the reforms included new measures to link work permits to vocational and occupational standards to increase workplace safety and protection. Recently LMRA has strengthened its search for finding such illegal practices.

Labour Market Regulatory Authority has conducted more than 18000 inspection visits, and 916 workers were deported after being found guilty. But still, a few prefer to take the risk by ignoring the fine and punishment for violating the labour rules.