

23,000 Abu Dhabi workers get Dh261 million unpaid salaries at doorstep, thanks to mobile court

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(File)

More than 23,000 labourers had unpaid wages amounting to Dh261 million delivered to their doorstep this year, as their cases were resolved through Abu Dhabi's mobile labour court. These workers had filed the complaints from January to June.

In one of the cases in February, more than 700 workers of a catering company received Dh26 million in unpaid salaries after the mobile court intervened and settled the issue amicably.

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Officials cooperated with the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization (Mohre) to end the year-long dispute between the workers and their employer over remuneration. The workers, including waiters, cooks, administrators and drivers, had spent months without wages as the company was reeling under financial crunch.

In June this year, 733 workers without bank accounts were able to receive their pending pay at their accommodation without visiting courts through the new mechanism launched by the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department.

According to the court figures, [unpaid wages amounting to Dh577 million](#) have been handed out to 53,000 workers from January 2019 until June 2020.

New measures for speedy resolution

The judicial authorities said they have over the recent years implemented a number of measures to ensure workers receive their unpaid wages.

"The new judicial initiatives have been rolled out by the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department over the past few years and these have helped in quick and easy settlement of labour disputes and payment of wages," said Abdulla Faris Al Nuaimi, head of the Abu Dhabi Labour Court.

These measures include a one-day court established in Abu Dhabi in 2018 and a mobile court that visits the workers' accommodations to resolve their disputes with employers.

How it is done

Using the mobile bus court, a special team from the labour court and other officials from the Mohre go to the workers' accommodations.

Authorities said they always intervene when the workers complain about spending months without salaries.

The labour court team ensures that all the workers' pending salaries are paid on the spot.

The officials liquidate the company's bank guarantee in order to use the cash in paying workers' dues and providing tickets for those wishing to return home.

Al Nuaimi said the UAE is keen on preserving and safeguarding the rights of workers and ensuring their protection under the rule of law, through a sophisticated judicial system.

He noted that since the outbreak of Covid-19, the number of labour disputes filed in court has decreased because of an increase in amicable settlements between workers and employers by the Mohre.

Plan to rope in charities

According to Al Nuaimi, the labour court is looking forward to cooperating with charity organisations in the country to help contribute financial support to workers, especially those whose salaries could not be paid by their employers.

He noted that no support channels have been opened up so far with these bodies, though the Zakat Fund and the Zayed Foundation have been contacted and discussions are ongoing.

The official said several charitable bodies have always extended humanitarian support to workers in individual cases by providing them with travel tickets to go back home or health insurance.