


# Indian migrant workers seek justice over wage theft




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**W**e will join the fight to address wage theft of Keralite migrants who have returned from foreign countries due to job loss following Covid-19 outbreak,” said Advocate Thampan Thomas, former member of Indian Parliament and the national secretary of Hindustan Masdoor Sangh (HMS).

He was inaugurating the national conference on wage theft of Keralite migrant workers. The event was organised by Centre for Indian Migrant Studies (CIMS), a grassroots level organisation which works for the welfare of migrants. The event was held in partnership with Thampan Thomas Foundation for Socialism and Labour Employment, Emigrants Welfare Forum and Migrant Forum in Asia.





National conference on wage theft of Keralite migrant workers held in Kochi

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Mr Ashraf said the wage theft is the apt word to define the denial of salary. While, Ibrahim Kutty expressed his union's solidarity to fight wage theft of Keralite migrants. Harikumar said that issues of migrants are too complex and the governments who are responsible to address them are failing to fulfil their responsibilities.

George Stephen also supported the complaint. He said that Keralite migrants who have returned from foreign countries are struggling to migrate and the governments are doing anything to address the issue.

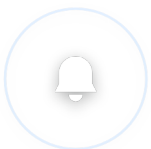
## **Kerala Wage Theft Report**

Parvathy Devi, a researcher associated with the CIMS, presented a Kerala Wage Theft report.

In the report, Parvathy stated that the total wage theft suffered by Keralite migrant workers who have returned due to job loss from foreign countries following the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak will be around Rs 1,200 crore.

Thousands of Keralites had flown back home from across the world during the pandemic after losing their jobs. As of July 15, 2021, NORKA Roots estimates that 10,98,334 returnees have lost their jobs abroad. And the NORKA data also says that 120,816 Keralites are yet to receive their unpaid salary.

Parvathy said based on their study they have found that, if one returnee has suffered a loss of Rs 1 lakh, then it would amount to Rs 1,200 crore.







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According to Parvathy, CIMS had also conducted a survey among 3,345 migrant workers out of which 397 individuals (11.86%) reported wage theft.

“Majority respondents were returnees and some of them were stranded abroad, waiting for justice,” she said.

Based on the analysis of data collected from each victim, Parvathy said an amount of Rs 6,25,873,366 has to be denied to 397 returnees due to wage theft. Based on this result, each worker has been denied Rs 1,576,507 on average.

Among the 397 Kerala migrant workers who reported the issue of wage theft, 90 per cent belong to the construction sector, two per cent in manufacturing, two per cent in transportation and 2.5 per cent comprising of other sectors such as domestic work, retail and medical.

Meanwhile, Rafeek Ravuther from CIMS said that many of the Keralite migrant workers who participated in CIMS survey were sent back to India in a hurry.

“They were sent home with the promise that their pending dues will be credited to Indian accounts or abandoned in destination countries by employers,” he added.

“This has prevented the majority of them from accessing justice mechanisms available at countries of destination. It was also found that many migrant workers were afraid to report and go forward with legal action as they feared it might affect their chances for getting a job abroad in future,” he said.

He also added that there might be several factors that shape an individual to behave this way but when a migrant worker behaves this way, it is because they are ignorant about their rights and because of their lack of trust in law enforcement agencies.

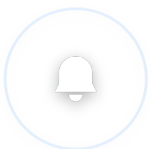


## National conference on wage theft of Keralite migrant workers held in Kochi

He said the Gulf returnees were denied access to justice and it is high time the governments come forward to take initiative to help the migrant workers and their families.

Lawyers from High Court and Supreme Court were also present. They addressed the conference to share their expertise on Legal Remedies for Wage Theft. Representatives from Swadesh Parkipandla, Sister Valarmathy, State Coordinator-(NDWM), Nasser.E, District Secretary, Kerala Pravasi Sangam, Gopi Chelakkara, CIMS UAE, Mohandas, (Ex Kairali Oman), Suresh Chandran, Keli. Riyadh, and Fr.Xavier, Commission for Migrants. KRLCC addressed the conference.

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