



LOCAL NEWS

Governance of temporary labor a complex and difficult issue

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KUWAIT: The International Organization for Migration (IOM) yesterday held a workshop addressing the issue of temporary contractual labor in GCC nations. Representatives of labor-related authorities from the six GCC states, as well as heads of diplomatic delegations in Kuwait, attended the event, which took place at the local UN headquarters in Meshref yesterday morning.

The workshop, entitled, 'Management of Temporary Contractual Labor in the GCC,' was held in order to identify the challenges facing the GCC states concerning easing workers' mobility within the GCC region. "We are living in an era where people are extremely mobile; some studies indicate that at any given moment every sixth person is on the move, and a new consensus is emerging in the UN suggesting that human mobility is directly related to countries' development" said Muhammad Shahidul Haq, the IOM's Middle East representative.

The governance of temporary labor is a complex and difficult issue to hand, and this workshop is an attempt to understand these complexities and the best ways to deal with them," he added. The IOM official also stressed the importance of foreign workers to the functionality of the GCC nations' economies.

The UN resident coordinator Adam Abdelmoula also pointed on the important role foreign workers play in the development of GCC economics, and the benefits which 'labor exporting countries' obtain as a result. "The exporting and importing countries, as well as the workers themselves, will all benefit from investing in developing efficient procedures that facilitate smoother mobility for temporary labors," he noted.

Iman Erigat, the Officer-in-Charge at the Kuwaiti IOM office, said that the importance of workshops of this nature comes from the fact that GCC states attract workers from all over the world, who form 65 percent of the population in these countries. Ereiqat commended the role of the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Meshary Al-Afasi, in advancing the livelihood of migrant workers in Kuwait.

We praise and support his bold and promising decisions, beginning with the gradual cancellation of the Kafel system, and the amendments made recently to the labor law, and with an upcoming legislation that will correct many unfavorable conditions affecting domestic workers in Kuwait," she explained.

Another of the prominent figures attending yesterday's event, Dutch Ambassador Ton Boon von Ochssee, said that the interaction between policies on human rights and labor represents a challenge for the GCC countries, that should be viewed as an opportunity rather than a threat. "The human rights-based labor policies represent a strong stimulus for the role of the labor market in the continuous development of a prosperous society," he noted.

Deputy Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Muhammad Al-Kandari also delivered a speech on behalf of the minister, in which he emphasized the Kuwaiti government's readiness to amend its labor policies if there is a need to do so.

The State of Kuwaiti will not hesitate to amend its labor-related legislation to comply with the development the country is witnessing," he stressed. The deputy minister pointed that the government works constantly to simplify and ease the visa registration procedures, by opening service centers in many areas, as well as making efforts to resolve any conflicts that might occur between employees and employers in the interests of both parties.

The two-day workshop, which concludes later today, is sponsored by the Embassy of the Netherland in the State of Kuwait, and is being held under the auspices of the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Dr. Mohammad Al-Afasi.