

Hamali workers demand housing

- [Staff Correspondent](#)

The hamali workers of the Hassan Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) are angry with the district administration for not fulfilling its assurance to provide them sites at S.M. Krishna Layout, being developed by the Hassan Urban Development Authority. They have decided to go on an indefinite protest from Wednesday, demanding sites for the poor workers, many of whom do not have a proper roof over their heads.

The hamalis, under the banner of the Karnataka State Hamali Workers' Federation, had staged a protest, demanding housing facility, in June last year. Following this, Deputy Commissioner Umesh H. Kusugal convened a meeting of all stakeholders on July 4. At the meeting, HUDA resolved to provide 600-sq.ft. sites at subsidised rates to 300 workers, and APMC agreed to bear the costs.

Mr. Dharmesh, district general secretary of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, said on Monday that when they enquired about the proposal, HUDA officials told them they did not have any sites set aside for hamalis.

The Hassan APMC yard has nearly 600 licensed hamalis, who load and unload agro produce, and of them, more than 400 don't have houses. K.S.Manjunath, the district convener of the federation, said, "By the age of 45, many hamalis lose strength in their limbs. They need the support of others to get up or walk."

S.M.K. Layout, being developed over 453 acres, will have 5,800 sites. HUDA had invited applications for the sites and there have been more than 9,000 applicants. K.M. Ramesh, commissioner of HUDA, told *The Hindu*, "As per the procedure, we have to set aside 30 per cent of the sites to the economically weaker sections. They will be charged only half the price of Rs. 525 per sq.ft. Over 1,600 people belonging to such categories have filed applications. They have already paid 10 per cent of the price. If we divert the sites to others, they will raise objections. However, the government has to take the final decision," he said.