

# Labour unions protest, seek benefits for workers

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**A**urangabad: Members of Bandhakam Kamgar Mahasangh, a construction workers' union associated with the Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh, staged a protest on Wednesday in front of the office of the labour commissioner here to press for various demands.

Special survival allowance to labourers, renewal of health insurance policy and retirement benefits are some of the major demands the union has raised.

According to the Mahasangh, construction workers often fail to get work due to non-availability of raw material among other genuine reasons. Also, female workers cannot undertake physical work once they conceive. In such cases, special survival allowance has to be given to labours, the union has demanded.

Raising the issue of alleged non-renewal of their health insurance scheme, labourers said they were facing financial problems in paying hospital expenses. "Registered construction workers get cover of Rs1 lakh under health insurance, but the policy has not been renewed for the last 10 months," said Mahasangh leaders.

Other demands raised include: Relaxing conditions for issuing registration certificate and the state government ratifying (officially approving) welfare schemes meant for labourers.

Meanwhile, the Marathawada Labour Union has demanded that porters and Mathadi workers (workers carrying load on their head) among other unorganised sector labourers be made eligible for benefits under the seventh pay commission.

Labour leader Subhash Lomte, while addressing the annual convention of the Marathawada Labour Union recently, alleged that

unorganised sector labours are being neglected by the government even though they form the economy's backbone.

"Unorganised sector labourers account for 93% of the total labour and they contribute to 65% of the total GDP (gross domestic product). Despite playing such a crucial role in the economy, these labourers are neglected while framing government policies," he said.

Reinstating Mathadi workers to their previous jobs and implementation of legislation meant for their welfare are some major demands the Marathawada Labour Union has raised.