

**PRESS RELEASE**

IIMA’s statement on the legal notice and recent alleged incident with migrant workers

**May 21, 2020 | Ahmedabad:**  ​​We have been served with a legal notice by Advocate Anand Yagnik. The issues raised in the notice do not stand the test of scrutiny and yet it is being circulated and being quoted by individuals and the press without regard for the veracity of the details outlined in the notice.

The notice makes the following assertions:

● IIMA being the principal employer has not paid wages to the migrant labourers since past two months.

We invite anyone who is interested to check the records on this. All bills raised on us go through a process of certification by our ▪ Project Management Consultants, ▪ the architect for the project, and ▪ our own project manager/engineer and are then paid. We have verified that all due payments have been made to workers. We do not have a pending bill as of the date of the serving of the legal notice.

● IIMA and contractor do not want migrant workers to go back to their parent states so that as soon as the restrictions are eased out, they can commence with the construction work again so as to meet with their project completion deadlines.

The restrictions on construction activity were lifted on 15th April and after sanitization of the site and checking the health of the workers construction activity was renewed in phases from 21st April. By the beginning of May once the government announced its intention and special trains to allow migrants to return to their home’s workers expressed an interest to not continue with work. Work on the construction site stopped by 7th May in deference to the wishes of the workers. The contractor co-ordinated with the administration for the repatriation of the workers. Workers from U.P. and Bihar were provided trains but unfortunately the public authorities did not arrange for trains to Jharkhand and West Bengal. Our interest is in the well-being of the worker unlike the case that is being presented in the legal notice.

● In spite of repeated requests between 28th April till date neither IIM or the contractor has made any arrangements to repatriate the workers from Jharkhand and West Bengal.

We invite those who believe this statement to check the applications given to the public authorities and the process followed to achieve the objective that workers are allowed to return to their home states.

● Migrant workers from Jharkhand and West Bengal are not paid minimum wages by the contractor for the work already rendered and considerable amount is due.

This too is a baseless statement. Our records are open for verification.

● The kind of accommodation provided to workers with the temperatures the city experiences in summer is inhumane and facilities made available violate labour laws.

We invite persons to visit the site where the workers are lodged. The location has all living facilities required for such colonies such as RO water, crèche, sanitation facilities, light/fan, and separate rows of accommodation for families and bachelors. A facility of a doctor for periodic health check-up is also made available.

● Of the workers detained by the police two are reported to be found corona positive. It is alleged that no steps are taken by us to duly test workers.

The health authorities have visited the facility where the workers are staying and have taken samples during the last two months. These tests came out negative. People can be asymptomatic for a period of time with no preliminary symptoms such as fever, cough, etc. Workers were regularly checked for symptoms and none were reported. If as is being reported two workers have tested positive, then the contractor will comply with whatever steps are required for isolation and quarantine of the other workers.

We believe that we have not violated any regulations and been fair to workers. If at all there has been a slippage on our part of any sort, we are ready to make amends and accept our responsibility. We appeal that rather than defame us the way the legal notice is seeking to do, it benefits the worker who we all seek to impact positively, that the facts be checked, the circumstances understood, and only then is it appropriate for the matter to be raised in the way that it has been.

The unrest of the workers from the construction site is not about wages and living conditions but about the delay in obtaining travel permits and the arranging of transportation by the public authorities to take them back to their home states. We are committed to doing what is possible from our side to see that happen.

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