



Seminar on
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Mass Exodus Impacts Labour Market

By Subramani Dharmarajan, Staff Reporter

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As thousands of illegal workers leave the UAE under the amnesty, operations have been hit across the spectrum – but there are new opportunities for labour supply companies.

The shortage has affected operations of logistic companies at the Jebel Ali port, which used to rely on illegal truck drivers and impacted the Dubai Metro project as well.

There is an acute shortage of truck drivers to transport consignments from the Jebel Ali port to Dubai and Sharjah, and companies have been compelled to use the services of freelancers who have to be paid Dh1,000 per day com-

pared to just Dh400 for illegal drivers, revealed the manager of a logistics company who declined to be named.

"The situation is so serious that owners have started to drive the trucks themselves," he said.

A supervisor at a Metro site requesting anonymity said 10,000 workers are being flown in from different countries to tide over the shortage.

While the work of setting up the infrastructure for laying overhead rail lines has progressed well, work on underground stations has been hit, he said.

Metro workers admitted that their workload had increased but took heart that reinforcements were on their way.

Shaukhat, from India, said the extra work was tough on him and workmates as they were fasting during Ramadan.

"But we do the work slowly, taking periodic rests," he add-

ed.

Dulscos LLC, a major player in the labour supply and outsourcing business, is upbeat over the impact of the amnesty.

"There has been a 10 to 15 per cent spurt in enquiries from contracting and other companies, but this has not as yet converted into higher business turnover," said S. Bala Kumar, General Manager of HR Solutions at Dulscos.

"With amnesty, we are now getting into a level playing field and take pride that all staff supplied by us are legal," he said.

Over 8% of UAE population heads for the exit

by Rob Corder on Friday, 14 September 2007



Illegal immigrants have been taking advantage of the amnesty since July. Up to 350,000 are expected to have left by the end of the amnesty in November.

Almost 10 percent of the UAE's population is heading for the exit, according to statistics released by immigration officials overseeing a five-month amnesty for illegal residents.

To date, around 185,000 people have taken advantage of the amnesty, which has now been extended to 3rd November.

A further 165,000 are expected to leave before the deadline, making a total of 350,000 people, or 8.5 percent of the UAE population of 4.1 million recorded at the last census.

Amnesties are not uncommon in the UAE - typically taking place every 3-5 years. But previous amnesties have witnessed only tens of thousands of illegal residents leaving the country.

This year's amnesty comes at a time when many Asian expatriates are considering whether working in the UAE makes financial sense. The spending power of the dirham is falling; cost of living is rising; Asian currencies, particularly the Rupee, are strengthening; and the job market at home is buoyant.

"I've ignored previous amnesties because there was always well-paid work here and I was able to send good money back to my family in Bangalore," said M. K. Khullar while standing in a queue waiting to board a plane to India at Dubai International Airport.

"Now I think I can provide a better life for my family by working on a construction site in India," he added.

Points to Ponder.

- With an Exodus of people leaving will this make finding workers harder in the immediate future? What are the alternatives?
- Should I be planning on having extra staff available to me due to the shortage of supply?
- Will Dubai still be globally competitive? Is this going to lead in a decline in the number on construction / investment projects undertaken and therefore affecting the economy?
- How is this reflecting on Dubai's status if low level workers are not seeing much worth in staying here? Could this effect me in the future? What do I need to do to avoid falling into this situation?
- What can be done to retain present workers who are also thinking that there is more worth in returning home and finding work there.