

STATEMENT ON WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK

A Safe Workplace is a Fundamental Right

On the occasion of the "World Day for Safety and Health at Work", Shramik Sanjal pledges its allegiance to safe working conditions for all the workers regardless of their job categories, work sites, and countries. We assure this commitment while abiding by one of our core objectives, which is 'to empower the Nepalese migrant workers'. As action steps, we attempt to disseminate authentic information on the dos and don'ts of workplace safety and instruct the workers on various aspects of mental health and well-being. Shramik Sanjal aims to conduct research on various issues faced by migrant workers with the intention that it might contribute to policy strengthening in their favor.

We call on the Government of Nepal to address aspects of a safe working environment, especially in climate-vulnerable countries such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries and Malaysia, by negotiating Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLA). Migrant workers, particularly those employed in outdoor settings, are frequently exposed to high temperatures and extreme weather conditions. It is high time that the BLAs of these countries are revised, as the labour permits of these countries show a significant number of migrants from Nepal. Between 14 January 2025 and 14 January 2026, more than 698,095 (with reentry) labour permits were issued to migrants going to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Malaysia.¹

In 2022, the International Labour Organization (ILO) officially recognized a safe and healthy working environment as a Fundamental Principle and Right at Work. Yet for millions of Nepalese migrant workers employed in the construction, manufacturing, and domestic sectors across the GCC and Malaysia, this right remains a distant reality.²

The Invisible Epidemic: Occupational Hazards and Heat Stress

Migrant workers are exposed to hazardous working conditions. One of the most pressing, yet unreported dangers in the Gulf corridor is extreme heat stress.

Research indicates that prolonged exposure to high temperatures without adequate rest and hydration directly correlates to acute kidney failure, cardiovascular collapse, and the tragic phenomenon of "unexplained" sudden deaths among young, otherwise healthy workers.³

¹ Country wise data from Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE); compiled by Shramik Sanjal.

² International Labour Organization (ILO), "Resolution on the inclusion of a safe and healthy working environment in the ILO's framework of fundamental principles and rights at work," adopted June 10, 2022, https://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/110/reports/texts-adopted/WCMS_848632/lang--en/index.htm.

³ Fair Square and Vital Signs Partnership, Vital Signs: The hidden toll of migrant worker deaths in the Gulf, 2022

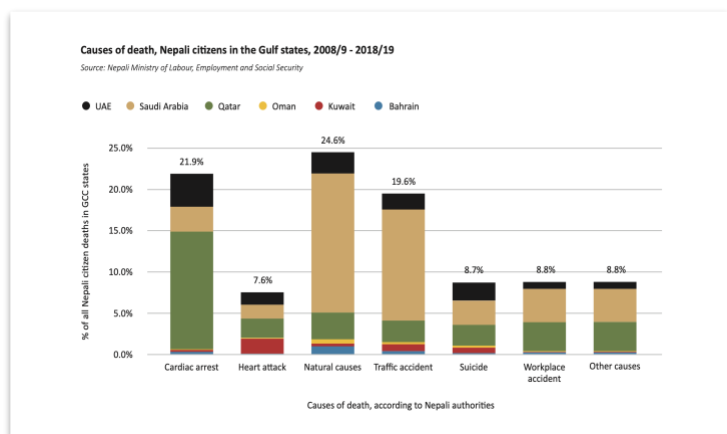
For Nepali migrant workers, the extreme heat of the Gulf is a matter of life and death, yet they are left unprotected. According to the Vital Signs report, low-paid outdoor workers are forced to labour in dangerous temperatures, which researchers call a "serious environmental justice problem." This extreme heat affects the bodies of young, healthy

workers, leading directly to a rise in severe kidney failure, chronic kidney disease (CKD) among in-services and returnees. Despite the destination countries rely on weak, outdated "summer working bans" that fail to keep workers safe.⁴

Summer working hours ban across the Gulf			
Country	Dates Ban in Force	Hours of Ban	Mandatory Work Stoppages per Year
Bahrain	Jul 1 to Aug 31	12 pm – 4 pm	248 hours
Kuwait	Jun 1 to Aug 31	11: am – 4 pm	460 hours
Oman	Jun 1 to Aug 31	12:30 pm – 3:30 pm	368 hours
Qatar	Jun 1 to Sept 15	10 am – 3:30 pm	588.5 hours
Saudi Arabia	Jun 15 to Sept 15	12 pm – 3 pm	279 hours
UAE	Jun 15 to Sept 15	12:30 pm – 3 pm	232.5 hours

Source: KILLER HEAT: The impact of extreme temperatures and climate change on migrant workers in the Gulf/June 2023.

Even more tragically, when workers die from these harsh conditions, their deaths are covered up. The report found that nearly half (47%) of all recorded Nepali worker deaths are vaguely labeled as "natural causes" or "cardiac arrest" without any real medical investigation. By refusing to perform proper autopsies, governments are hiding the true cost of migrant labour and denying grieving families both the truth and the compensation they deserve.⁵



Source: The Death of Migrants in the Gulf (March 2022)

⁴ ibid.

⁵ Vital Signs Partnership, Killer Heat: The Impact of Extreme Temperatures and Climate

Change on Migrant Workers in the Gulf (London: FairSquare, June 2023).

Shramik Sanjal Demands a Fair Occupational Justice

To bridge the gap between international standards and the daily reality of migrant workers, Shramik Sanjal demands the following:

1. Mandatory Heat

Protections: We urge destination countries to enforce strict, Evidence-based regulations on outdoor working hours during extreme heat. Work contracts must explicitly guarantee shaded rest areas, adequate hydration, and heat-safe scheduling as contractual obligations, not as discretionary favors.

2. Comprehensive Health

Insurance: Employers must provide full health coverage that extends beyond immediate accidents to include occupational diseases and long-term health conditions, including heat-related kidney disease and other chronic illnesses acquired on the job. The government of Nepal and GCC countries urgently need to ensure that necessary legislation and regulatory frameworks are in place to safeguard the health and well-being of migrant workers.

3. Transparent Death

Investigations: The automatic labelling of worker deaths as

“natural causes” must end. Every migrant worker death must be subject to a thorough, independent autopsy with findings shared transparently with families who are entitled to both the truth and fair compensation.

This demand is grounded in the constitutionally guaranteed right to life (Article 16) and based on the Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by LAPSOJ and Pourakhi Nepal.⁶ As highlighted by the Supreme Court, the government has a fundamental obligation to identify the true causes of migrant deaths, implement pre-departure health screenings, and establish dignified mechanisms for repatriating bodies, irrespective of a worker's legal status. The migrant workers' families deserve the truth, and the state must uphold its duty of care.⁷

4. Inclusion in Safety

Committees: At Shramik Sanjal, we believe a safe work environment ought to be integrated within the system and must be a shared responsibility across leadership and employees. Migrant workers must have the protected right to participate in safety committees; free from fear of retaliation, termination or deportation.

⁶ Law and Policy Forum for Social Justice (LAPSOJ), "Periodic Updates on Ongoing PIL: Right to Life of Migrant Workers (Writ No. 074-WO-0283)," accessed April 27,

2026, <https://lapsoj.org/periodic-updates-on-ongoing-pil/>.

⁷ FairSquare and Vital Signs Partnership, Vital Signs (2022).



Safety and health at work are not privileges granted by an employer; they are fundamental to human rights, recognized by international law, and owed to every worker regardless of nationality, contract type, and migration status.

On this World Day for Safety and Health at Work, Shramik Sanjal stands in solidarity with every worker who has been injured, fallen ill, or lost their life in conditions that should never have been tolerated. We will continue to research, organize, and advocate until the environment our workers build is as safe as the future they deserve.