

Hundreds of outsourced staff left unemployed in Tirupati as contract with TTD expires

The TTD management has said that the 1,400 employees can be re-hired only after inviting tenders, once the lockdown is lifted.



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Around 1,400 workers employed by the TTD (Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams) have been left without a job amid the lockdown. The outsourced workers lost their jobs after the TTD's contract with the outsourcing agency came to an end. Scores of employees took to the streets in Tirupati on Friday to protest, while wearing masks and maintaining physical distance.

While half the workers had been employed at the TTD's guest houses and other properties in Tirupati town, the others had been working in Tirumala, closer to the Venkateswara shrine on the hills. The workers had been performing various duties, like housekeeping, security management, maintenance, sweeping and other sanitation and cleaning works for the TTD.

The contract with Padmavathi Hospitality and Facility Management Services (PHFMS) ended on April 31. The temple management said that they would re-hire the workers only after inviting tenders, once the lockdown is lifted.

Kandarapu Murali, CITU (Centre of Indian Trade Unions) state Vice President for Andhra Pradesh, alleged that the



“The workers had also been facing difficulties with the outsourcing firm and its managing partner [Coronavirus LIVE](#) lu. But the TTD board has had about 75 days since their meeting in February to call for tenders and find a new contracting agency. Being their primary employer, TTD failed to take action or make any alternate plans for the workers till the last minute, leaving hundreds of workers with no livelihood,” Murali said.

While the temple has been closed to devotees since mid-March, several guest houses owned by the TTD are being used by the state government to provide shelter for those who are stranded due to the lockdown.

“Workers have continued to work in these few places, on a rotating basis with smaller shifts. Many of them had continued working till April 31,” Murali said.

Workers’ unions protesting the TTD’s decision to end the contract have pointed out that the Centre has issued advisories saying people should not be removed from their jobs during the lockdown period, and that employees must continue to be paid their salaries even if they are unable to work. In spite of changing governments and TTD officials, many of the workers have been working for the TTD for nearly 20 years, the unions said in a statement.

A TTD official said the employees had to be relieved as the contract had ended and new tenders can be invited only once the lockdown is lifted. He added that there was no work to be done, since the shrine has been closed for visitors.

However, Murali pointed out that the few workers who continue to perform their duties where required, have also been asked to leave. “They (TTD) have said that they will bring in workers from a different agency, through an oral agreement, until a new contract is signed,” Murali alleged.

Workers continue to protest in small numbers while taking necessary precautions, and no new employees from other agencies are being allowed to come to work as part of the protest, Murali said.

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