

# Illegal baseless UNA strike at KVM Hospital

For the last 6 months, United Nurses Association (UNA) has been waging a baseless strike at KVM hospital.

## The main demands of the strike were:

1. Ensure government stipulated 2013 Minimum wages for Nurses
2. Ensure 3 shift system
3. Give permanent jobs to two trainee nurses who had completed their 6 months term.

## UNA demands

## The actual facts

1. Ensure government stipulated 2013 Minimum wages for Nurses

KVM hospital had already implemented 2013 Minimum wages for all permanent Nurses and their salary was being paid through Wage Protection Scheme (WPS) electronically via the labour office. KVM is also giving an interim hike of 25%.

2. Ensure 3 shift system: 6hr, 6hr, 12hr

Prior to the strike KVM hospital had offered to start 3-shift system with legal working hours, but UNA turned down the offer. 3-shift system is functioning in KVM since Sept 2017 in the following pattern: 8hrs, 8hrs & 8hrs (the night shift includes 8hrs work + 4 hrs protected sleep time = 12hrs, thereby ensuring that nurses can come early evening to work and leave home in early morning).

3. Give permanent jobs to two trainee nurses who had completed their 6 months term.

This is a totally illegal demand, as far as temporary workers are concerned. It is the discretion of the management to decide whom to keep and whom not to, after the completion of their term. KVM hospital is well within the law to do so.

It is indeed very sad to note that the labour department has been hand in glove with UNA, thereby allowing them to continue with a totally illegal strike for so long. As per Section 12(4) of the Industrial Dispute Act, the matter ought to have been referred for adjudication, once it was clear that the UNA demands were baseless.

## Conclusion:

It is clear from the above that UNA has brought about enormous damage to KVM Hospital resulting in:

- Closure of hospital for 2 months
- Loss of salary to entire staff of KVM including nurses, doctors and paramedical workers.
- Severe financial losses to KVM hospital that would take years to recover.
- By intimidating the striking nurses not to leave the strike for the last 6 months and paying them monthly salary to continue with the strike, UNA have for all practical purposes made the striking nurses lose their jobs at KVM.
- They have caused enormous harm to the people of Cherthala who were relying on KVM hospital for treatment of life threatening emergencies like heart attack, strokes and severe head injury, resulting in many preventable deaths in the community, as they were not able to access the services of KVM hospital – the only Tertiary care centre in Cherthala.