

# New push to extend summer work ban

BRINGING forward a summer ban on outdoor work could be among the topics up for discussion during a meeting between labour officials and business leaders expected to take place this week.

Bahrain bans all outdoor work between midday and 4pm during July and August to protect the workforce from potentially fatal heat-related medical conditions.

However, Labour Ministry Under-Secretary Sabah Al Dossary told the *GDN* that calls to extend the ban until the beginning of June could be



■ Mr Al Dossary

put on the table during a meeting with the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) in the coming days.

"The decision is not in the hands of the Labour Ministry and the business community has to be involved in discussions related to this topic," said Mr Al Dossary.

"We will raise the demand in a forthcoming meeting with the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry, if possible.

"We have debated the topic during past years and the business community was not keen on it because it would affect businesses.

"However, we are open to listening to the business community and what they have to say on concerns raised by campaigners.

"We also have to admit that the weather is getting better, unlike the last two weeks."

Human rights campaigners have long called for the summer ban on outdoor work to be extended until the beginning of June, due to concerns over the welfare of outdoor workers.

On June 27, 2010 the temperature was recorded at 46.9C – the hottest June day on record – and 2009 saw the hottest June since records began in 1902, with an average temperature of 35.2C for the month.

The meeting between the Labour

Ministry and the BCCI is taking place with temperatures already passing the 40C mark this year. Bahrain's Civil Aviation Affairs Meteorology Directorate has predicted an average high temperature of 39C for this week.

"(Bringing forward) the ban will help boost the productivity and efficiency of the workers and decrease the number of employees falling sick due to heat, which is better for employers," said Migrant Workers Protection Society (MWPS) chairwoman Marietta Dias.

"A two-month ban is not sufficient, especially with the weather getting hot-



■ Ms Dias

ter these days.

"When we ourselves can't bear the heat even for a few minutes, how human is it to expect these men to work in the heat with all those uncomfortable safety gadgets on?"

The two-month ban on outdoor work between midday and 4pm in July and August is now in its eighth year.

According to Labour Ministry figures there was 97.72pc compliance last year.

Violators face prosecution and fines of between BD500 and BD1,000 for each worker found working outdoors by inspectors.



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