

# Company sets example for worker accommodation

## HOUSING COMPOUND AIMS TO GIVE LABOURERS THEIR RIGHTS

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Staff Reporter

**Dubai** Six to a room, big kitchens and clean toilets — a construction company has built workers' accommodation that they said is respectful of worker rights, and encouraged other UAE businesses to follow.

Rajai Kayyal, Capriole Construction's managing director, showed this reporter the new accommodation for 400 workers. Tiled rooms have six beds "for workers", others have four beds for gang leaders and drivers, and studios for foremen. Each floor has a large kitchen, 18 toilets and bathrooms.

Kayyal said companies had their priorities wrong.

While his accommodation was expensive, costing Dh4.5 million (Dh70,000) a room, he said the company will reclaim costs in three years because of increasing rents. Many workers live in crowded, substandard labour accommodations because sky-rocketing rents push companies into overcrowding workers accommodations they rent or own.

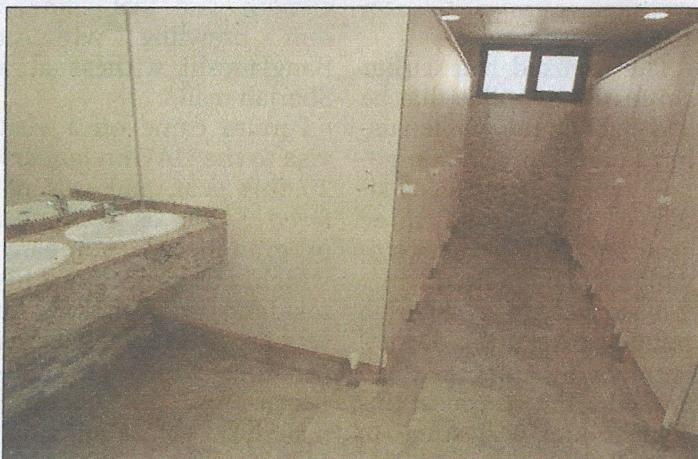
### For zero attrition rate

Kayyal said the company, which runs 12 projects, had high productivity and no absconding workers — a problem among construction companies.

"When you give better conditions, you expect better productivity."



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### Spacing out

One of the bedrooms in Capriole Construction Company's new worker accommodation (top). Toilets in the housing compound (above). Labourers and other staff will be housed on three floors with 23 rooms on each floor, each room accommodating six people.

He said the company also paid Dh2 above market rates — between Dh23 and Dh28 daily for unskilled workers, and Dh28 to Dh35 for skilled workers.

The Dubai Chamber of Commerce estimates there are about 304,983 workers in Dubai's construction sector, although it not clear how many workers' hous-

### IMPACT

#### Detailed study of issue planned

PCLAD plans to undertake a more detailed study of workers' accommodation in Dubai as it work progresses. Marwan Abdullah, a PCLAD official, said the committee was unlikely to do a complete survey, "it will take too long and it wont resolve any issues to do one".

"We'd rather try to get a better idea of how many camps there are, and how many we've visited, and the effect that's having on the others. We may visit a small number but they may have a big impact as word gets out."

— D.H.

ing compounds there are. An official from the Permanent Committee of Labour Affairs in Dubai (PCLAD) said most companies violate municipal codes for labour camps. This month, officials ordered nine companies, "the worst offenders", to provide alternative workers' accommodation after finding dirty toilets, no kitchens and broken airconditioning at the camps.

Marwan Abdullah, a PCLAD official, said there are some companies who did build good worker camps. "Some may have small violations but some have good camps, and it's important to praise the good while punishing the bad."