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Accident panel plea

AN industrial accident tribunal should be set up to speed workers' claims for compensation, a pressure group suggested yesterday.

The Association for the Rights of Industrial Accident Victims said a survey it had conducted recently showed there were many loopholes in the present employees' compensation law.

The survey, conducted from September to November, interviewed 138 workers who had been in hospital because of industrial accidents.

One major finding revealed the workers had various kinds of difficulties in claiming two-thirds of their wages during their sick leave, as stipulated in the law.

Of those interviewed, about 12 per cent failed to get any compensation.

Of those who got paid, 56 per

cent were unable to claim the full amount and about 40 per cent could not get the payment on time.

About 85 per cent of those interviewed said they had complained to the Labour Department, but with no result.

The majority said they had financial difficulties after the accidents.

About 70 per cent of them earned a monthly income below \$3,000.

To solve the cash problem, these workers had to tighten their belts, borrow money from friends, draw on their savings or apply for public assistance.

Those who applied for public assistance said it was too little to be of much help.

Most workers also expressed dissatisfaction over assessments on the seriousness of the injuries

sustained in accidents, which determined the amount of compensation.

A spokesman for the association, Mr Chan Kam-hong, said to plug the loopholes of the present compensation law, a tribunal should be formed.

The proposed tribunal, if established to deal specifically with disputes arising from industrial accident compensation, would speed up workers' claims, Mr Chan said.

Mr Chan also suggested the Government set up an industrial accident victims assistance scheme to help those workers who did not succeed in claiming fair compensation from their employers.

The assistance scheme would lessen the financial burden on families of victims who died in industrial accidents, he said.