

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.2093
TO BE ANSWERED ON 12.05.2016

WORKERS FROM KERALA IN MIDDLE EAST

2093. SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of citizens from Kerala who had to return from the Middle East in recent years;
- (b) the number of citizens from Kerala who are in jails in Middle East countries;
- (c) the steps Government has taken to address the large number of complaints about cheating and exploitation in Saudi Arabia; and
- (d) the steps Government has taken or proposes to take to rehabilitate those who are returning to India due to the grim economic situation in the Middle East?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

- (a) As per the information available with Indian Missions/Posts, a total of over 157200 Indian nationals have returned to India from the Middle East in the last three years. State-wise data, however, is not available.
- (b) A total of 3649 Indian nationals are currently incarcerated in prisons in countries in the Middle East. State-wise data, however, is not available.
- (c) On receipt of complaints, our Mission/Post in Saudi Arabia takes up the issue with the Saudi sponsor and, where necessary, with the concerned Saudi authorities, as also with Recruiting Agents (RAs). Complaints against Indian RAs are sent to the concerned offices of the Protector of Emigrants (PoEs) for appropriate action by them. Indian workers are also counselled to approach the concerned labour office, labour court and police authorities, for possible resolution of their grievance(s). The Mission/Post also deputes officials to visit labour/general courts and the companies concerned for assisting the aggrieved Indian labourers.

In order to provide assistance to distressed Indian nationals and members of their families, our Embassy in Riyadh and the Consulate General in Jeddah provide the following facilities:

- i) A 24x7 Helpline manned by officials well-versed in multiple languages for better contact with the Indian nationals.

- ii) The Mission/Post addresses welfare issues through providing shelter (boarding and lodging) to runaway housemaids in distress, medical treatment and arranging for their repatriation.
 - iii) Through registered volunteers from the Indian community, counselling/ assistance is provided to workers in distress for taking up the matter with the Saudi authorities for resolution of their problems.
 - iv) MADAD, an online portal mainly created for the Community Welfare (CW) related problems, is functional since February 2015. The Portal is regularly monitored in the Mission/Post at various levels, thus giving high priority to grievances of Indian nationals.
 - (v) The Indian Community Welfare Fund is used for providing relief and assistance to the needy Indian workers, including for repatriation to India, for meeting expenditure on dispatch of mortal remains in deserving cases and for providing emergency medical treatment to destitute Indians for providing assistance to runaway housemaids.
 - vi) Our Mission/Post officials regularly attend the labour/general courts, where the cases of the Indian nationals come up for hearing. They also provide free interpretation services to Indian workers, whenever required.
 - vii) Our Mission/Post has successfully implemented the e-Migrate project, which is envisaged to transform emigration into a simple, transparent, orderly and humane process by reducing the human interface in the recruitment of workers.
 - viii) Government of India has signed a bilateral Domestic Service Workers (DSW) agreement with the Government of Saudi Arabia in January 2014, which regulates the terms and conditions of Indian workers working in the houses of the Saudi sponsors in Saudi Arabia. The agreement also brings all such workers under the ambit of the Saudi Labour Law.
- (d) Whenever requests are received for rehabilitation of Indian nationals returning to India, Ministry of External Affairs refers such requests to the concerned State Governments.
