GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT

RAJYA SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1216
TO BE ANSWERED ON 21.09.2020

REHABILITATION OF MIGRANT LABOURERS

1216 SHRI MALLIKARJUN KHARGE:

Will the Minister of Labour and Employment be pleased to state:

(a) what steps were taken by Government to safeguard the interests of migrant labourers from exploitative employers;
(b) the number of migrant labourers thrown out of their places of residences by their employers/landlords;
(c) what plans Government made has for such migrants before announcing the lockdown;
(d) what rehabilitation measures were taken by Government for such migrants; and
(e) whether many migrants have to leave their work and return to their villages, if so, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER
MINISTER OF STATE (IC) FOR LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT
(SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR)

(a) to (e): The global spread of the corona virus (Covid-19) followed by lockdowns has caused economic disruptions across the globe including India. This has also resulted in reverse migration of large number of workers from destination States to the Home States. As per the data received from the States, more than 1.06 crore migrant workers, returned to their home-State. However, now, with the process of the unlock-down, many migrant workers have started returning to their work places in the destination States.

The Inter-state Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979, has provisions to protect the interests of the migrant workers against the coercive exploitation by private parties and contractors. It entitles the migrant workers to receive displacement allowances, journey allowances and other facilities.

Some of the rehabilitation measures taken by the Government to safeguard the interests of the migrant workers and to address their grievances are mentioned below:

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1. In order to resolve the grievances of migrant workers during lockdown, Ministry of Labour and Employment set up 20 Control Rooms all over the country. During lockdown, more than 15000 complaints of the workers were resolved through these Control Rooms and due to the intervention of Ministry more than two lakh workers were paid their due wages amounting to about Rs. 295 crores.

2. Ministry of Labour & Employment issued advisory to the States /UTs and the Employers' Associations on 20th March, 2020 asking them to extend their cooperation by not terminating their employees, particularly casual/ contractual workers from job or reduce their wages.

3. Ministry of Home Affairs in its order dated 29th March, 2020 instructed that the landlords of the migrant workers shall not demand payment of rent for a period of one month and not ask to vacate their premises.

4. In the same order, the Government instructed the industry, shops and commercial establishments to make payment of wages to workers, at their work place, on the due date, without any deduction, for the period of their establishments remain under closure during the lockdown.

5. Ministry of Labour and Employment also issued comprehensive Advisory Guidelines on 27th July, 2020 to all the States/UTs for Covid safety and welfare of the migrant workers returning to their workplaces in the destination states.

6. Various initiatives have been taken by the Ministry of Labour and Employment as part of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana(PMGKY) and Atmanirbhar Bharat which, interalia, include (i) payment of 12% employers' share and 12% employees' share under Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), totalling 24% by the Government of India for six wage months from March to August, 2020 for all the establishments having up to 100 employees with 90% of such employees earning less than Rs.15,000 monthly wage; (ii) reduction in PF contribution from 12% to 10% of wages for the wage months of May, June and July, 2020; (iii) non-refundable Covid advance from the PF by amending the EPF Scheme, 1952.

7. Approximately 80 crore beneficiaries are being provided additional 5 kg wheat or rice and 1 kg of preferred pulses, free of cost every month till November, 2020 under provisions of National Food Security Act.

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8. In response to the Government of India's directions, the State Welfare Boards have cumulatively disbursed around Rs.5000 crore, to approx. 1.83 crore Building and Other Construction (BOC) Workers during lockdown and thereafter. In addition to this, around 30 lakh BOC workers have also been provided food relief packages.

9. Further, in order to boost employment and livelihood opportunities for migrant workers, returning to villages, in the wake of COVID-19 outbreak, Government of India has launched Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan on 20th June 2020. The Abhiyaan focuses on durable rural infrastructure and providing modern facilities like internet in the villages. Skill Mapping of the rural migrant labour is also being done to enhance their employability on the basis of the skills, they possessed to enable them work closer to their homes. The Abhiyaan involves intensified and focused implementation of 25 target driven works to provide employment and create infrastructure in the rural areas of 116 districts of 6 States with a resource envelope of Rs 50,000 crore. The Abhiyaan has already generated 28,75,06,108 man-days till date.

10. Apart from this, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has launched various schemes for migrant workers who have returned to their native places. One of the schemes is Anganwadi services which has been extended to children of migrant workers.

11. For the benefit of 50 lakh street vendors, Government of India has also launched SVANidhi Scheme to provide them collateral free working capital loan upto Rs.10,000/- to resume their lost livelihood due to Covid and lock-down.

12. To provide employment to the migrant workers Ministry of Transport and Highways has identified the ongoing works/new works for the road construction.

13. In rural areas, wages under MGNREGA have been enhanced from Rs.182 to Rs.202 per day for the benefit of rural workers including returning migrant workers.

14. Ministry of Food Processing Industries have sanctioned 700 food processing/preservation and infrastructure projects in which migrant labourers can employment.

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