

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
**RAJYA SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION DIARY No-1676**  
ANSWERED ON-13/03/2025

**ASSISTANCE TO INDIAN WOMEN STRANDED IN ARAB COUNTRIES**

1676. SHRI SANT BALBIR SINGH

Will the Minister of External Affairs be pleased to state :-

(a) the steps being taken by Government to stop human trafficking of the country's daughters in Arab countries and the action taken against the agents involved in these human trafficking, State-wise information including Punjab for the last five years;

(b) whether the Ministry is engaging with Governments of Arab nations to establish stronger legal protections and bilateral agreements to safeguard the rights and well-being of Indian women working there; and

(c) the support systems, such as dedicated helplines, Indian embassies and legal aid cells in place to assist Indian women facing difficulties in Arab countries?

**ANSWER**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a) Missions/Posts from time to time receive requests for repatriation to India from distressed female workers facing issues related to excessive work, mistreatment, confiscation of passports, denial of entry/exit permit/renewal of visa/final exit permit, and non-payment of salary etc.

To protect female workers from exploitation/harassment, the Ministry has made process of issue of Emigration Clearance (EC) mandatory only through 13 State-run Recruiting Agencies who proceed for employment to any of the 18 ECR countries. Women, who are holding Emigration Clearance Required (ECR) passport, can travel to any of the ECR country for employment only through these State-run Recruiting Agencies (RAs), if they have attained age of 30 years and above. The Foreign Employer (FE) who wishes to directly recruit an Indian female worker has to mandatorily deposit a security of USD 2,500/- in the form of a bank guarantee with the Indian Missions/Posts in the ECR countries. At the time

of grating EC, Protector of Emigrant Offices (POEs) seek a copy of the bank guarantee duly attested by the Indian Mission to ensure that the bank guarantee has been deposited by the FE with the Indian Mission/Post.

As a special measure for protection of our female professionals, including nurses going to the ECR countries, they have to register on e-Migrate portal for scrutiny of their employment related documents/contracts for grant of mandatory EC, as stipulated in the Emigration Act, 1983.

Ministry issues advisories through eMigrate portal, social media handles and other modes of publicity about the perils of fake job rackets and ways to prevent the same. Till February 2025, a total of 3,281 illegal agents in country including in the State of Punjab, have been notified on the eMigrate portal. The awareness campaign on safe and legal migration through eMigrate portal has been carried out by the Ministry across the country including in Punjab by conducting workshops, trainings, information sessions, digital campaigns for media groups, police officials and law enforcement agencies, local administration, aspiring recruiting agents, entrepreneurs and general public. During these sessions awareness on emigration regulations, schemes beneficial for emigrants like Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY), Pre-Departure Orientation Training (PDOT), eMigrate portal and various advisories issued by Indian Embassies are brought to the notice of all stakeholders.

As and when complaints of illegal migration/human trafficking are received, such matters are referred to the State police for investigation and prosecution under the relevant legal provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and other legislation in place including that enacted by the Punjab Government like Punjab Prevention of Human Smuggling Act, 2012. In the cyber domain, action is also taken against illegal recruiting agents in association with Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C), MHA and State Police authorities. Requests to take down social media posts of illegal recruiting agencies from all over India including Punjab have been regularly shared with I4C.

(b) The Labour and Manpower Cooperation MOUs/Agreements that provide the overarching framework for cooperation on labour and manpower-related issues are in place with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) and Jordan. Further, to safeguard the specific interests of domestic workers in GCC Countries, agreements on Labour Cooperation for the Domestic Sector have been signed with Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait. Based on Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) signed with the host countries, matters related to welfare and protection of workers, including female workers, are also taken up during regular meetings of Joint Working Groups with host countries. In addition, such matters are also regularly taken up with respective government through diplomatic channels.

(c) Government of India accords highest priority to the safety, security and wellbeing of Indian nationals abroad and has robust mechanism to monitor their living and working conditions. Our Missions and Posts abroad remain vigilant and actively monitor and follow-up the grievance(s), if any, received from the Indian nationals including women abroad. The grievances are received and responded through various channels i.e. Emergency telephone number, Walk-ins, e-Mails, Social Media, 24x7 Multilingual Helpline and Open Houses etc. To enable any aggrieved Indian national to online register his/her grievances, the Government has established Portals such as MADAD and e-Migrate. Pravasi Bharatiya Sahayata Kendras (PBSK) have been set up in Dubai (UAE), Riyadh, Jeddah (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) to provide guidance and counselling to Indian workers abroad on all matters. There are dedicated Labour Wings in all the Indian Missions in Gulf Countries.

On receipt of information about any Indian national being in distress, Indian Mission/Post abroad immediately gets in touch with him/her, the local Foreign Office, and concerned local authorities, as the case may be, to ascertain the facts of the case and to ensure Indian national's welfare and well being. In addition to extending all possible consular assistance, Mission/Post also assist in providing legal aid, wherever needed. Mission/Post also maintains a panel of local lawyers, where Indian community is in sizeable numbers.

Indian Missions/Posts regularly organize Open Houses and Consular Camps in remote areas to get the feedback from the Indian nationals abroad and address their grievances, if any. On receipt of a complaint, the same is pro-actively taken up with the concerned Foreign Employer (FE) and, if needed, the work place of the aggrieved worker is also visited. The complaints pertaining to employment issues are also taken up with the local Labour Department and other relevant authority of the host country for prompt redressal.

The Missions/Posts utilize the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) from time to time to provide financial and legal assistance to Indian national in distress abroad on a means-tested basis. Under ICWF, the major assistance includes Boarding & Lodging, Air Passage to India, Legal Assistance, Emergency Medical Care, Transportation of Mortal Remains to India, and Payment of Small Fines and Penalties. Since the launch of ICWF, total 3,53,369 Indian nationals have been assisted by till September 2024 with a total outlay of Rs. 683 Crore.

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