

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.4298
TO BE ANSWERED ON 21.03.2018

NON-PAYMENT OF WAGES TO WORKERS IN QATAR

4298. DR. KIRIT P. SOLANKI:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether a large number of Indian migrant workers in Qatar have gone unpaid for up to four months and if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by the Government to resolve this issue;
- (b) the measures undertaken by the Government to ensure the protection of interests of Indian migrant workers in the Gulf nations;
- (c) whether the Government has identified the reasons behind such problems which persist despite reforms like the introduction of a Wage Protection System and if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) whether any special provisions have been made to promote the welfare of women workers and if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (c) The Indian Mission in Qatar has informed that no such case has specifically been reported to them in the recent past where Indian nationals have not been paid their monthly wages for up to four months. However, the Mission had received a request in February, 2017 where 162 workers employed in M/S Scale Trading & Contracting Company had not received their salary for five months and denied final settlement and exit permit with passport. Mission had taken up the matter with the Qatari authorities. The Mission arranged the air tickets from Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) and repatriated 160 Indian emigrant workers while the remaining 2 opted to continue working in the company.

The Government of Qatar launched a Wage Protection System (WPS) in November 2015, which made it mandatory for all companies to pay salaries of their workers directly into their bank accounts. However, there are other reasons also, due to which workers sometimes face problems, such as:

- (i) disputes with sponsors/company;
- (ii) underpayment of salary/allowances;
- (iii) non-payment of overtime;
- (iv) premature termination of services;
- (v) non-release of passports;
- (vi) unhygienic living conditions in camps; and
- (vii) non-availability of proper medical facilities etc.

Indian Missions take up these issues immediately with concerned Government authorities for prompt redressal.

The Government has taken several steps to safeguard the interests of Indian emigrants to the Gulf countries, these are:

- (i) The on-line MADAD portal enables the emigrant workers and their family members to register their consular grievances online and track their redressal.
 - (ii) Grievances related to Overseas Employment in notified Emigration Check Required (ECR) countries including gulf countries, can also be logged in directly by emigrants/relatives or through the Overseas Workers Resource Centre (OWRC) on eMigrate portal. These grievances are settled by respective jurisdictional Protectors of Emigrants (PoEs) as per laid down procedures.
 - (iii) Missions in Gulf countries also conduct Open Houses on a regular basis where workers can seek redressal of their grievances.
 - (iv) A multi-lingual 24X7 Helpline of Overseas Workers Resource Centre (OWRC) in New Delhi provides information, guidance and grievance redressal on all issues and problems pertaining to overseas employment of Indian nationals.
 - (v) Missions in Gulf countries have also established 24x7 helplines and Toll Free help lines for the benefit of Indian workers to seek help.
 - (vi) Indian Workers Resource Centres (IWRC) have been set up at Dubai (UAE), Sharjah (UAE), Riyadh, Jeddah (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), to provide guidance and counselling on all matters pertaining to overseas Indian workers.
 - (vii) Migrant Resource Centres in Delhi, Kochi, Hyderabad, Chennai and Lucknow have been merged with PoE Offices for greater synergies in assisting emigrants or their relatives to redress their problems/complaints regarding overseas employment.
 - (viii) The Missions utilise the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) to provide assistance to overseas Indian nationals in times of distress.
 - (ix) Suitable accommodation to distressed Indian nationals has been setup in Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE and Malaysia to provide temporary accommodation.
 - (x) Labour and Manpower Cooperation MoUs/Agreements are already in place with the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries that provide the institutional framework to comprehensively discuss and review labour related issues.
- (d) In order to promote the welfare and protection of women workers, Government has taken further measures in restricting the recruitment of ECR passport holding Indian female workers only through six State Government recruiting agencies w.e.f. 2nd August, 2016 to avoid their harassment by foreign employers. The Foreign Employers who intend to recruit Indian female domestic workers directly, have to register themselves on e-Migrate System with the respective Missions and deposit a bank guarantee equivalent to US\$2500/-. The age restriction of 30 years has also been made mandatory in respect of all women emigrants emigrating on ECR passport, irrespective of the nature/category of employment. Further, mandatory Insurance and medical cover is extended to all Indian workers including women, through Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana (PBBY). The Missions are also proactive in providing medical and legal support to distressed Indian

women workers and take all possible measures, using ICWF funds for their speedy repatriation to India. The Mission houses such women workers at its premises as they await completion of their repatriation process by the Deportation Centre.
