

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.6169
TO BE ANSWERED ON 04.04.2018

PROBLEMS FACED BY INDIAN WORKERS

6169. SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is aware that many Indians working in various countries, are facing problems in the absence of their passports and other documents for which they are forced to deposit with the employer and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether in the absence of passports, employees/workers cannot leave the employer for better service conditions elsewhere; and
- (c) if so, the details thereof and the manner in which the Government proposes to help such workers?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (c) The Indian Missions have been receiving grievances from Indians working in ECR countries, related to their working and living conditions, including delay/non-payment or underpayment of salaries, allowances, refusal of leave, non-renewal of visa, labour card as well as reports of retention of passports by some employers. Some Indian workers have reported that their sponsors take their passport at the time of their arrival for the purpose of completing formalities such as making their Resident Permit and do not return it. In some ECR countries, even if the employees have passports, a No Objection Certificate is required from the employer for exiting the country or switching employer.

Most of the Gulf countries already have laws in place, which prohibit employers from taking away the passport from their employees. Those workers, who report loss of passports with the Indian Missions, are immediately helped in issuance of a new passport. Those desirous of returning to India, are provided with an Emergency Certificate (EC) to facilitate their return to India by the Missions. In accordance with the Labour and Manpower Cooperation/Agreement, Joint Working Group (JWG) meetings are held on regular basis to discuss various labour related issues including the issue of taking away of passport by Foreign Employers. The Indian Missions regularly take up such cases through official channels so that the passports are returned to the Indian nationals concerned.

In addition to the above, the following initiatives have been taken for the welfare and security of Indian emigrants:

- (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 and Sharjah (UAE), Riyadh and 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 have also been setup in Delhi, Kochi, Hyderabad, Chennai and Lucknow to assist emigrants or their relatives to redress their problems/complaints regarding overseas employment. These function directly under the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE)/Protectors of Emigrants (PoE) for prompt redressal.
- (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 have been setup in the Missions of Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE and Malaysia to provide temporary accommodation before repatriation.
- (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, from time to time.
