

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.2781
TO BE ANSWERED ON 10.07.2019**

UNPAID WORKERS IN GULF

2781. SHRI NARANBHAI KACHHADIYA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether a large number of migrant workers in Qatar and Gulf Nations have gone unpaid in past days 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 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 provision has 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

[SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN]

- (a) From time to time, the Indian Missions in Gulf countries, including Qatar, receive complaints regarding non-payment of wages/salaries of Indian migrant workers in these countries. Compared to the proportion of Indian workers in Gulf countries, such complaints are marginal. As soon as such complaints are received, the concerned Indian Missions actively follow up the matter with local sponsors and authorities concerned to ensure that the workers are paid their due wages/salaries.
- (b) The Government has taken several steps to ensure the protection of the interests of Indian workers in Gulf countries, including the following:
 - (i) The on-line MADAD and e-Migrate portals enable the emigrant workers and their family members to register their grievances on-line and track their redressal.
 - (ii) A multi-lingual 24X7 Helpline of Pravasi Bharatiya Sahayata Kendra (PBSK) in New Delhi and other PBSKs in Dubai (UAE), Sharjah (UAE), Riyadh, Jeddah (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), provides information, guidance and grievance redressal

on all issues and problems pertaining to overseas employment of Indian nationals. The PBSKs further send these grievances to e-Migrate and MADAD portals which are accessible to all Protector of Emigrants (PoEs) and Indian Missions.

- (iii)** Labour and Manpower Cooperation MoUs/Agreements are in place with the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries that provide the institutional framework to comprehensively discuss and review labour related issues. 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 payment related issues under working conditions.
- (iv)** Missions in ECR countries conduct Open Houses on a regular basis where workers can discuss their working conditions and seek redressal of their grievances.
- (v)** The terms for usage of Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) which has been created to help Indian nationals in distress, have been further liberalised. From 1st September, 2017 the Heads of Mission have been delegated powers for usage of ICWF funds for extending legal assistance on means tested basis.

(c) According to the cases followed up by our Missions in Gulf countries, the main reasons for such problems to persist despite reforms like the introduction of a Wage Protection System, include the following:

- (i) Workers who have gone illegally or through unscrupulous agents.
- (ii) Economic and financial challenges of employers, including bankruptcy in some cases.
- (iii) Disputes with sponsors or companies due to various reasons, including amount of salaries to be paid, working conditions, and violation of local laws such as working for someone else than the sponsor.

(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 seven State Government recruiting agencies w.e.f. 2nd August, 2016. 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 been made mandatory in respect of all women emigrants with ECR passports, irrespective of the nature/category of employment. The female domestic workers going through e-Migrate are covered by insurance through Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana (PBBY). Also, the Missions are proactive in providing medical and legal support to distressed Indian women workers and take all possible measures,

including using the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF), if necessary, for their speedy repatriation to India.
