

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- 3607

ANSWERED ON- 21/03/2025

PLIGHT OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT WORKERS

3607 SHRI S JAGATHRATCHAKAN

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether the Government is aware that Indian workers are being deceived into inhumane working conditions in the Gulf countries;**
- (b) if so, the details of the measures taken to address the issue;**
- (c) the details regarding the measures taken by the Government to address the exploitative Kafala System existing in Gulf countries and West Asia; and**
- (d) whether the Government has been successful in addressing the loopholes in the Emigration Clearance that the labour contractors and agents, operating in international networks, often circumvent to these safeguards and if so, the details thereof?**

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a) to (c) It has been noticed that some of the Indian workers abroad, including in Gulf countries, at times face difficulty due to inhumane working conditions. Majority of these complaints pertain to labour disputes like delay in payment or non-payment of salaries as well as that of end of service benefits, unauthorized retention of passports, longer working hours, non-provision of leaves, not providing overtime wages, offering jobs different to that promised at the time of recruitment, unemployment due to sudden closure of companies, problem while changing the employers, problem related to accommodation, denial of legitimate labour rights, ill treatment/harassment, non-issuance/renewal of residence permits, non-cancellation of visas, refusal to grant exit/re-entry permits to visit India, refusal to allow return to India on final exit visa after completion of contracts, non-provision of medical and insurance facilities, and not being paid compensation upon death etc.

Government of India accords highest priority to the safety, security and well-being of Indian nationals abroad and has robust mechanism to monitor their living and working conditions. The Indian Missions and Posts abroad remain vigilant and actively monitor and follow-up the grievance(s), if any,

received from the Indian nationals 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 in distress, the concerned 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 the welfare of the Indian nationals 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 Indian 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.

Constant negotiations are held with the local government to ensure that Indian workers are not subjected to the abuses that arise from the Kafala system, and to encourage the adoption of more flexible and equitable labour laws.

(d) The process of overseas employment, including grant of Emigration Clearance (EC), of Indian nationals holding ECR passports and emigrating to any of the 18 notified ECR countries is done through e-Migrate portal. The web-based application makes the process of emigration fully digital,

transparent, safe, legal, humane, efficient, convenient, and faster. It seamlessly brings all stakeholders, including Foreign Employers (FEs), registered Recruiting Agents (RAs) and the prospective emigrants on a common platform and enables MEA to capture comprehensive and online database. An updated, revamped and user friendly eMigrate-V2.0 web portal was launched on 14 October 2024. The eMigrate Mobile App has also been developed for the first time and is available on all App Stores online. The App allows the stakeholders to have easy access to major services available on the portal, including tracking of application status, obtaining list of registered as well as unregistered recruiting agents, filing grievances etc.
