

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- 5604

ANSWERED ON- 04/04/2025

BETTER WORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR INDIAN EXPATRIATES

5604. SHRI PUSHPENDRA SAROJ

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

- (a) whether it is fact that Indian citizens working abroad especially in the Gulf countries are facing challenges related to labour rights, legal protection and repatriation during crisis;**
- (b) if so, the details thereof;**
- (c) the measures implemented by the Government to ensure the safety, fair treatment and welfare of Indian expatriates; and**
- (d) the manner in which India is strengthening diplomatic engagements to secure better working environment/conditions for Indian workers?**

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a) to (d) Majority of complaints received by Indian Missions in Gulf countries from Indian workers pertain to labour disputes (non-payment or delay in payment of salaries, refusal to grant leave or ‘exit/entry permits’, denial to arrange the ‘final exit visa’, delay in renewal/non issuance of resident permits etc.).

The Government of India accords highest priority to the safety, security and well-being of Indian nationals including Indian emigrant workers abroad. To ensure the protection of Indian migrant workers, the Emigration Act, 1983 serves as the regulatory framework governing overseas employment. The Act establishes safeguards against exploitation, regulates recruiting agents and foreign employers, and mandates emigration clearances. Its enforcement is carried out through the Offices of the Protector of Emigrants (POEs), which are set up across the country to oversee the emigration process.

Welfare initiatives

Recognizing the challenges faced by Indian workers abroad, the Government has launched several initiatives to promote safe and informed migration. To digitalise and streamline the emigration process, the Government has introduced eMigrate 2.0, a transformative e-governance platform developed under the Overseas Employment (OE) and Protector General of Emigrants (PGE) Division of MEA. Powered by open-source technology and API-based architecture, this platform enhances efficiency, and transparency in overseas employment procedures, aligning with the Government of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) vision.

Notable schemes include the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY) and Pre-departure Orientation Training (P-DOT). The PBBY provides mandatory insurance coverage for Emigration Check Required (ECR) category workers heading to 18 designated countries. The scheme offers an insurance cover of INR 10 lakh for accidental death or permanent disability, with a minimal premium of INR 275 for two years or INR 375 for three years. Complementing this, under the Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana, the P-DOT program conducted by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Skills and Entrepreneurship, equips workers with essential soft skills and knowledge to navigate their

employment abroad. The trainings are carried out by NSDC and State governments.

The Government has been actively enhancing awareness about its schemes and policies through state-level outreach programs such as the ‘Videsh Sampark’ initiative. In 2018, the Ministry introduced the ‘Surakshit Jaayen, Prashikshit Jaayen – Go Safe, Go Trained’ campaign to further raise awareness about the importance of legal and skill-based migration.

Grievance redressal mechanisms

Additionally, the Government has established a robust framework to assist Indian nationals found in distress situations. Through the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF), Indian Missions and Posts abroad provide crucial assistance, including the repatriation of mortal remains, emergency medical aid, legal assistance, and support for stranded workers.

These services are accessible through multiple channels, including walk-ins at embassies, emergency helplines, grievance redressal portals like MADAD and CPGRAMS, as well as through social media platforms. To offer

direct assistance and counselling to Indian workers overseas, Pravasi Bharatiya Sahayata Kendras (PBSKs) have been established in key locations such as New Delhi, Dubai, Riyadh, Jeddah, and Kuala Lumpur. These centers serve as crucial support hubs, guiding workers on their rights and available resources.

International Cooperation and bilateral arrangements

The Government has also been working towards establishing institutional mechanisms to foster the global mobility of Indian workers as well as students, academicians, researchers, business persons etc. through diverse MoUs/agreements such as, Migration and Mobility Partnerships (MMPAs), Labour mobility and Labour Welfare with destination countries. These Agreements/MoUs seek to enhance global employment opportunities for Indian workers while protecting their labour rights, preventing irregular migration and supporting skill development. MMPAs have been signed with Austria, Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Denmark and UK. Labour Mobility Agreements have been signed with Japan, Portugal, Taiwan, Mauritius, Malaysia and Israel.

Additionally, Labour and Manpower Cooperation Agreements have also been signed with the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC), like Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE and with Jordan, that provide overarching framework for cooperation on labour and manpower issues. To safeguard the specific interest of domestic workers of the GCC countries, who are often in the most vulnerable category, the Ministry has signed separate agreements with Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait.

Recognizing the vulnerability of certain migrant groups, especially Domestic Sector Workers (DSWs) and female workers, the Government has implemented specific protective measures. Separate Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and Agreements with Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Kuwait outline safeguards for domestic workers. Additionally, only state-run recruitment agencies are authorized to facilitate the overseas employment of female workers in these categories, and a minimum age of 30 years has been set for their migration to mitigate exploitation risks.

Further, the Government has proactively participated in the various international/regional/multilateral fora and platforms on international migration such as the International Migration Review Forum, Abu Dhabi

Dialogue, Budapest Process, the International Dialogue on Migration, Global Compact for Migration regional reviews which involves sharing of best practices and discussions on critical areas aimed at facilitating safe and regular labour migration. India also assumed the chair of the Colombo Process for a two year period in 2024.

Repatriation of Indians during crisis situations

In recent years, Government of India has facilitated repatriation to India of distressed Indian nationals from countries affected by war and internal conflict such as Yemen (2015), Libya (2014), Israel (2023) and Syria (2024) etc, through well-coordinated operations. The quick and smooth repatriation of Indian nationals back to India has been universally appreciated in India and abroad.
