

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- 3342
ANSWERED ON - 08/08/2025
INDIAN WORKERS ABROAD

3342. SHRI RAJA RAM SINGH

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government maintains country-wise data of Indian workers employed abroad, along with details of their employment status—contractual, permanent, or undocumented, if so, the details thereof;**
- (b) the list of recruitment agencies or companies involved in sending Indian workers to foreign countries and the regulatory mechanisms governing their operations;**
- (c) whether the Ministry is aware of widespread reports of underpayment, wage theft, and poor working conditions faced by Indian migrant workers, particularly in Gulf countries and Southeast Asia, if so, the remedial actions taken in this regard;**

(d) the number of complaints or representations received by Indian missions regarding labour rights violations during the last five years; and

(e) whether the Government plans to strengthen monitoring, legal aid, and repatriation support for such workers, and introduce stricter oversight of recruitment practices to prevent exploitation, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a) Ministry maintains data in respect of Indian workers, holding Emigration Check Required (ECR) passports, proceeding for employment overseas through e-Migrate portal to any of the 18 notified ECR category countries. In the last five years from 01 January 2020 to 30 June 2025, a total number of 16,06,964 Indian workers have been issued Emigration Clearances (ECs). Country-wise data on the number of ECs granted in the last five years is given in Annexure – A.

(b) The process of emigration of Indian workers having Emigration Clearance Required (ECR) category passports and proceeding for overseas employment to any of the 18 ECR countries, is regulated under the Emigration Act, 1983, which is administered by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) through Overseas Employment (OE) and Protector General of Emigrants (PGE) Division. As per this Act, no persons/agencies can function as recruiting agent/agency without obtaining a valid registration certificate issued by the registering authority. The details of registered Recruitment Agents (RAs) are available on the e-Migrate portal (link: <https://emigrate.gov.in/#/emigrate>).

The Ministry takes appropriate measures and issues guidelines from time to time to regulate the registered RAs in the country. As per Section 10 of the Emigration Act, 1983, no person/agency can function as Recruiting Agent (RA) without a valid Registration Certificate (RC) issued by the Registering Authority i.e. Protector General of Emigrants (PGE). The process of registration of RA is done through a web-based application i.e. eMigrate portal which brings all the stakeholders, including the RAs, Foreign Employers

(FEs) and the prospective emigrants on a common platform. Whenever, any complaint against a registered RA is received, a Show Cause Notice (SCN) is issued to the concerned RA, under Section 14 of the Emigration Act, 1983, directing them to resolve the complaint. In case, the RA fails to respond to the SCN or reply is not found to be satisfactory, their RC can be cancelled or suspended for 30 days as per Section 14(2) of the Emigration Act, 1983. The order of suspension can be revoked by the Competent Authority only after consultation with all the stakeholders and after ensuring that the complaint has been fully resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant. Ministry also publishes a list of unregistered RAs on the eMigrate portal. Advisories/alerts on fraudulent/illegal recruiting agencies are also hosted on this portal. Ministry also takes action against illegal migration through unregistered/illegal RAs with the support of concerned State Governments.

(c) & (d) The Indian Missions abroad receive complaints from workers, particularly domestic sector workers, on account of poor working conditions, non-payment or delay in payment of salaries and denial of other benefits such as medical facilities, refusal of leave or

denial of exit/re-entry permits for visits to India, denial of final exit visas to the workers to return to India after completion of the contract, maltreatment by the employers etc. Incidents of confinement, physical abuse, abandoning of housemaids by their sponsors have also been reported. Most of the complaints pertain to workers, who do not have proper employment contracts and have migrated illegally, in violation of Government norms for recruitment of ECR workers from India.

It has also come to the notice of the Government instances of dubious firms involved in fake recruitment job offers having lured Indian nationals mostly through social media channels to South-East Asian countries and made them to carry out cyber crime and other fraudulent activities from scam centres operating in these countries. The exact number of Indian nationals stuck in these countries is not known as Indian nationals reach these scam centres on their own volition through fraudulent/ unscrupulous recruitment agents/ agencies and through illegal channels.

(e) The Government of India accords highest priority to the safety, protection and wellbeing of Indian workers abroad including those in

the Gulf countries and South-East Asia. There are established channels to enable the Indian workers to reach out to the Embassy/ Consulate in case they need any assistance. They can contact the Embassy/ Consulate through walk-in, email, multilingual 24x7 emergency numbers, Whatsapp number, grievance redressal portal like MADAD/ CPGRAMS/ eMigrate, and social media, etc. There are dedicated Labour Wings for handling such matters. Pravasi Bharatiya Sahayata Kendra has been set up in key locations such as New Delhi, Dubai, Riyadh, Jeddah, and Kuala Lumpur to provide guidance and counselling to the Indian workers.

On receipt of complaints of exploitation from Indian workers, the Missions/ Posts abroad, including in the Gulf and South-East Asian countries, promptly take action including reaching out to the foreign employers/ sponsors/ local Government authorities as well as the Recruiting Agents for redressal of the complaint.

Further, the Government has taken several initiatives such as the Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojna (PBBY) and Pre-Departure Orientation & Training (PDOT) in ensuring that Indian migrant workers undertake safe migration, have decent working and living conditions in

destination countries, are aware of their rights and have access to various welfare schemes of the Government.

Indian Missions/Posts abroad regularly organize Open Houses and Consular Camps in remote areas to get feedback from Indian workers residing in such areas and to address their grievances, if any. On receipt of complaint from or on behalf of the emigrant, the same is taken up pro-actively with concerned Foreign Employer (FE) and the work place of the aggrieved worker is also visited, if required. The complaints pertaining to employment issues are also taken up with the local labour department and other relevant authorities of the host country for prompt redressal.

Further, as additional safeguard for protection and safety of the Female workers, Government has authorized only State run Recruiting Agencies (RAs) to recruit Indian female domestic sector workers holding ECR category passports for overseas employment in Gulf and other notified ECR Countries through the e-Migrate Portal. Moreover, there is a minimum age criteria of 30 years for female workers holding ECR category passport for overseas employment to protect them against exploitation.

The Embassy/Consulate also utilizes the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) from time to time to provide financial and legal assistance to Indian nationals in distress 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.

Annexure - A

Total no of ECs granted during the last five years (01.01.2020 to 30.06.25), year-wise & country-wise							
Country	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Total
BAHRAIN	4,175	6,383	10,232	7,376	8,607	3,634	40,407
INDONESIA	1		3		3	7	14
IRAQ	759	935	1,430	1,599	2,761	791	8,275
JORDAN	317	2,386	2,487	1,187	3,137	1,024	10,538
KUWAIT	8,107	10,158	71,432	48,212	39,862	24,188	201,959

LEBANON	21	54	282	200	130	6	693
MALAYSIA	2,435	36	12,836	15,319	5,606	1,820	38,052
OMAN	7,206	19,453	31,994	21,336	24,258	12,593	116,840
QATAR	8,907	49,579	30,871	30,683	23,785	9,676	153,501
SAUDI ARABIA	44,316	32,845	178,622	200,713	167,598	71,175	695,269
SOUTH SUDAN		1	1			19	21
SUDAN					2		2

THAILAND	10	1	3	4	10		28
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	17,891	10,844	33,233	71,688	111,308	96,401	341,365
Total	94,145	132,675	373,426	398,317	387,067	221,334	1,606,964
