

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 5694

ANSWERED ON 27/03/2026

BILATERAL LABOUR AGREEMENTS WITH WEST ASIAN COUNTRIES

5694. SHRI SACHITHANANTHAM R

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

- (a) the details of the bilateral labour agreements or MoUs signed by the Government with the West Asian countries to protect contract labourers rights along with the monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure its enforcement;**
- (b) whether the Government has taken up cases of exploitation under the Kafala sponsorship system with the host Governments, if so, the details and the outcome thereof;**
- (c) whether legal aids cells are functioning in all Indian missions in West Asia, if so, the details thereof; and**
- (d) the number of workers who availed legal assistance during the last three years?**

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a) & (b) The Government has established a robust institutional framework to promote safe and legal migration while ensuring welfare and safety and preventing exploitation of Indians abroad, including Indian workers. MoUs/Agreements such as Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreements (MMPAs), Labour Mobility and Labour Welfare Agreements have been signed with the partner countries for establishing robust frameworks for migrant workers welfare and protection and legal migration and for preventing irregular migration. The Labour and Manpower Cooperation MOUs/Agreements that provide the overarching framework for cooperation on labour and manpower related issues have been signed with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) and Jordan. Further, to safeguard the specific interests of domestic workers in GCC Countries, agreements on Labour Cooperation for Domestic Sector Workers (DSWs) have been signed with Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait.

It has been noticed that some of the Indian workers abroad, including in Gulf countries, at times face difficulty due to unfair working conditions. Majority of these complaints pertain to labour disputes like delay in

payment or non-payment of salaries and overtime wages as well as that of end of service benefits, unauthorized retention of passports, long working hours, inability to take leave, offer of jobs different to that promised at the time of recruitment, unexpected layoff, inordinate complexity in changing the employers, problems of accommodation, denial of legitimate labour rights, non-issuance/renewal of residence permits, refusal to grant exit/re-entry permits to visit India, refusal to allow return to India on final exit visa after completion of contract, non-provision of medical and insurance facilities, denial of death benefits to family etc.

Government of India has robust mechanism to monitor working conditions and grievance redressal of all Indian workers abroad. Our Missions and Posts abroad remain vigilant and actively monitor and follow each type of grievance received from the Indian nationals in foreign countries. 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 the aggrieved Indian national to easily 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 (Saudi Arabia) to provide guidance and counselling to Indian workers

abroad on all matters. There are dedicated Labour Wings in all the Indian Missions in GCC Countries.

Indian Missions/Posts regularly organize Open Houses and Consular Camps in remote areas to get the feedback from the Indian workers abroad and address their grievances, if any. On receipt of complaint from or on behalf of the emigrant, the same is taken up pro-actively with the concerned Foreign Employer 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 authority of the host country for redressal.

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 the ICWF major assistance includes boarding and lodging, air passage to India, legal assistance, emergency medical care, transportation of mortal remains to India and payment of small fines and penalties. Until Dec 2025, around Rs. 758 crores has been utilized by Indian Missions/Posts abroad under the Fund and around 3.67 Lakhs Indians were extended assistance.

(c) Indian Missions and Posts assist in providing legal aid wherever required by Indian nationals including those cheated by agents and those facing physical or mental harassment or injustice by sponsors etc. Indian Missions/Posts also extends all possible consular assistance to Indians imprisoned abroad. A local panel of lawyers is maintained by all such Indian Missions/Posts where Indian community exists in sizeable numbers. Indian Missions/Posts regularly organize Open Houses and Consular Camps to get the feedback from the Indian workers abroad and address their grievances. As soon as the information about the detention/arrest of an Indian national is received by an Indian Mission/Post, it immediately gets in touch with the local Foreign Office and other concerned local authorities to get consular access to the detained/arrested Indian national to ascertain the facts of the case, his or her Indian nationality and ensure his or her welfare. No fee is charged from any Indian prisoner for extending facilities by the Indian Embassy concerned.

(d) The expenditure details on providing legal assistance to the workers during the last three years and the current year in the Gulf region is placed at Annexure-A.

The number of workers who availed legal assistance during the last three years				
		2023	2024	2025
Sl. No.	Countries	Beneficiaries	Beneficiaries	Beneficiaries
1	Bahrain	5	5	0
2	Iraq	0	0	1
3	Kuwait	1	4	4
4	Oman	138	36	0
5	Qatar	156	72	51
6	Saudi Arabia	2	1	0
7	UAE	6	0	1
	Total	308	118	57
