

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3512

ANSWERED ON:16.04.2008

PLIGHT OF INDIAN WORKERS AT MISSISSIPPI SHIPYARD USA

Appadurai Shri M.;Gaikwad Shri Eknath Mahadeo;Kharventhan Shri Salarapatty Kuppusamy;Patel Shri Kishanbhai Vestabhai;Singh Shri Uday;Yadav Shri Anirudh Prasad (Sadhu);Yaskhi Shri Madhu Goud

Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is aware of the plight of Indian workers living in extreme inhuman conditions at Mississippi Shipyard, U.S.A. as reported in 'The Hindustan Times' dated March 09, 2008;
- (b) if so, the details of the facts reported therein;
- (c) whether the Government has taken up the matter with the U.S. Government;
- (d) if so, the response of the U.S. government thereto;
- (e) whether these workers have revolted and filed a lawsuit against their employer allegedly involved in human trafficking racket in the U.S.;
- (f) if so, the details thereof;
- (g) whether the workers have requested the Indian government to protect their families in India from the intimidation of recruiting company in Mumbai; and
- (h) if so, the action taken/proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS(SHRI VAYALAR RAVI)

(a) & (b): Yes, Sir. As per the reports received from the Indian Mission in USA, a total of 590 Indian workers were recruited by the foreign employer M/s Global Resources Inc., Mississippi, through M/s Diwan Consultants, Mumbai. They had gone to US on H2B visas (Guest Workers Visa Programme) valid initially for 10 months, extendable at the discretion of the employer and the US authorities. The workers were deployed in the yards of M/s Signal International, a marine fabrication company, located at Pascagoula, Mississippi and Orange County, Port Arthur, Texas. They were mainly aggrieved on account of alleged poor accommodation and amenities, deductions from their salary for accommodation, food, electricity, water and also non-fulfilment of the alleged initial commitment of permanent residency status etc.

(c) & (d): The Indian Mission in USA has approached the US Government to conduct detailed investigation on the complaints of the Indian workers and take remedial measures.

(e) & (f): On 6th March, 2008, about 100 workers demonstrated outside the office of their employer demanding continued employment, better salary and amenities in addition to fulfilment of initial commitments regarding permanent residency status / Green Card etc. They held a press conference at New Orleans on 10th March, 2008 and also held protest marches. They also filed a case at the Fifth Circuit District Court, New Orleans, alleging human trafficking against the company M/s Signal International and the recruiting agencies.

(g) & (h): 120 workers met the Indian Ambassador in Washington on 27th March, 2008 highlighting their demands of expediting investigation into their grievances, prevent their deportation from USA, arrange permanent residence status and prevent harassment to their families in India by the recruiter. However, this Ministry has not received any complaint of harassment by the recruiters from the families of the workers.

This Ministry has suspended the license of M/s Dewan Consultants and M/s. S. Mansur & Co., Mumbai, black listed the foreign employer and is also initiating legal action against the Recruiting Agent for violation of Emigration Act, 1983. The Indian Mission has also taken steps to withhold visas from the main US recruiters involved to prevent them from entering India to conduct recruiting operations.