

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2322

ANSWERED ON:28.03.2012

EXPLOITATION OF INDIAN WORKERS

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

- (a) whether the Government is aware of the sexual and other forms of exploitation of the Indian workers/women in Gulf countries;
- (b) if so, the details thereof during the last three years;
- (c) the action taken by the Government in this regard along with the outcome thereof, till date; and
- (d) the reaction of the Government thereto?

Answer

MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS(SHRI VAYALAR RAVI)

(a): The Indian Missions receive complaints from Indian workers including women workers particularly housemaids on account of non-payment of salaries, long working hours, inadequate living conditions, physical harassment, refusal of leave or 'exit/re-entry permits' 'final exit visa' etc.

(b): The details are given in the Annexure enclosed.

(c) & (d): Whenever a complaint is received, action is initiated by the Ministry by asking the concerned Indian Mission to look into the matter. If need be, steps are taken for the suspension or cancellation of the Registration Certificate of the Recruiting Agent. If required, requisite legal action is also initiated against the concerned Recruiting Agent. Complaints filed against illegal agents are referred to the State Governments. When there is a complaint against a foreign employer, proceedings for black listing such an employer are initiated. Indian Missions also take up these issues with the foreign employers/local governments to protect the welfare of the workers.

The Government has taken several initiatives to protect the welfare of Overseas Indian Workers which inter alia include:

(i) The Ministry has notified the Emigration (Amendment) Rules 2009 on 9th July, 2009 revising the eligibility criteria of Recruiting Agents (RAs) and increasing the security amount and service charges.

(ii) A Nation wide Awareness-cum-Publicity Campaign through media is carried out to educate intending emigrants about legal emigration procedures, risk of illegal migration and precautions to be taken during emigration.

(iii) The Ministry has set up the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) in all the Indian Missions for providing onsite support and financial assistance to Indian workers in distress.

(iv) The Government has established an Overseas Workers Resource Centre (OWRC) which is a 24 hour telephone helpline in eight languages to provide authentic information to intending emigrants as well as emigrants on all aspects of emigration.

(v) Indian Workers' Resource Centre (IWRC) is also functioning at Dubai for taking care of emergency needs of Indian workers.

(vi) India had signed Labour Agreements with Jordan and Qatar in the 1980s to protect the interests of the Indian Workers. Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) were signed with United Arab Emirates (UAE) in December, 2006, with Kuwait in April, 2007, with Oman in November 2008, with Malaysia in January 2009, and with Bahrain in June 2009. An Additional Protocol to the existing Labour Agreement between India and Qatar was signed in November, 2007.

(vii) These MOUs enhance bilateral co-operation in management of migration and protection of labour welfare. Under these MOUs Joint Working Groups (JWG) have been constituted that meet regularly in order to resolve bilateral labour issues.

In addition, the Government has taken the following measures for protecting the safety and welfare of women workers of the ECR (Emigration Check Required) category to emigrate to 17 ECR notified countries: -

(i) Minimum Age limit of 30 years has been made mandatory in respect of all intending women emigrants.

(ii) The employment contract must be duly attested by the Indian Missions in respect of all such women.

(iii) Women household workers are allowed to emigrate after the Indian mission has attested the identity of the foreign employer and terms and conditions of contract.

(iv) A pre-paid mobile facility must be provided by the employer to every woman Household Worker. If the Foreign Employer recruits the worker directly, he is required to deposit a security of \$2500 with the Indian Mission. From the above annexure, it may be seen that incidence of complaint is on the declining trend.