

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:81
ANSWERED ON:11.12.2013
PROBLEMS REPORTED TO INDIAN MISSIONS
Agarwal Shri Jai Prakash

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Indian Missions abroad have received complaints/ petitions/representations from Indian citizens/people of Indian origin about the problems/hardships being faced in the countries of their residence;
- (b) if so, the details thereof along with the number of such complaints/ petitions/representations reported during each of the last three years and the current year; and
- (c) the details of the steps taken by the Government to address their problems through the diplomatic channels, country-wise?

Answer

THE MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHID)

(a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (c) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 81 REGARDING "PROBLEMS REPORTED TO INDIAN MISSIONS" FOR ANSWER ON 11.12.2013

(a) Indian Missions and Posts abroad do receive complaints/petitions/ representations from Indian nationals about various problems being faced by them in the country of their residence.

(b) The complaints mainly pertain to:

(i) non-payment/delayed payment or underpayment of salaries; (ii) non-renewal of visa/labour permit on time; (iii) withholding of passports by sponsor/employer; (iv) physical/sexual abuse by employer; (v) termination of employment in an arbitrary manner; (vi) unsatisfactory living conditions including sub-standard food at the camp site; (vii) refusal of employers to pay for medical treatment, denial of leave and air ticket to the hometown as stipulated in their work contract, etc.; (viii) complaints from bereaved families in India over delay in transportation of mortal remains of the Indian worker as well as non-payment of death-related compensation by employer; (ix) complaints by Indian nationals over delayed consular services extended by the Mission/Post; (x) complaints from Indian women who are victims of domestic violence or deserted by their Indian/foreign husbands in developed countries, viz, the USA, the UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada; (xi) Indian students in some countries like the UK and CIS countries have complained about cheating by the local educational institutions as well as discriminatory treatment leading to failure in completing their education; (xii) Indian nationals approach Missions when they are victims of attacks/ assaults/thefts/fraud overseas.

The number of complaints received by the Indian Missions, based on the information received so far, are separately given in the table attached.

(c) Whenever a complaint or petition is received by the Indian Missions/Posts abroad, the officials immediately take up the matter with the concerned authorities in the local government for redressal. The issue is also taken up with the local Foreign Office through Note Verbale and, if required, by arranging meetings with the concerned local authorities including universities, law enforcement authorities, etc. Many a time, our Mission/Post officials take up the matter directly with the employer also. The issues concerning protection of the interests of Indian nationals are regularly raised during meetings with local dignitaries and during bilateral meetings. As regards complaints by Indian nationals over consular services, these are settled expeditiously through the grievance redressal system, including in Open House Meetings conducted by the Heads of Mission.

In recent years, Indian Missions/Posts abroad have taken the following steps to safeguard the interests of the Indian nationals:

(i) Establishment of a dedicated Community Welfare Wing with designated Welfare Officers in all Indian Missions/Posts abroad; (ii) Appointment of Student Welfare Officers in the Indian Mission/Post abroad; (iii) Setting up of 24x7 Emergency Helpline for distressed Indian nationals; (iv) More proactive approach in reaching out to Indian communities overseas and ascertaining their problems and hardships; (v) Establishment of Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) in all Indian Missions/ Posts abroad. The aim of establishing the ICWF is to help the Indian Missions abroad to meet contingency expenditure incurred by them for carrying out various on-site welfare activities such as boarding and lodging, emergency medical care, legal assistance, air-passage to distressed and stranded Indian workers including housemaids and transportation of mortal remains, wherever required; (vi) Compulsory Attestation of Service Agreement of all household workers which includes mandatory insurance cover and provision of mobile phone by the employer; (vii) Assistance to jailed/detained Indian nationals; (viii) Financial assistance to Indian women duped by their NRI husbands; (ix) Shelter

Homes for distressed Indian Housemaids. During their stay at the shelter, the entire expenditure on their boarding, lodging and medical treatment is met by the Mission from the ICWF; (x) Assistance and settlement of labour disputes between expatriate Indian nationals and the local employer through amicable negotiations and correspondence; and (xi) Signing of Memorandum of Understanding with foreign governments to ensure better protection and welfare of Indian workers.