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Title: Regarding various issues faced by Non-Resident Indians.

SHRI P. KARUNAKARAN (KASARGOD): Sir, I would like to place before this House some important issues with regard to the NRIs, Non Resident Indians. Today, thousands of NRIs have come to Delhi, the Capital city of our country. There was a march to Parliament and they have also given representation to the Government. Sir, India has been claimed as the highest exporter of the human resource, especially in 2004, and has retained this position till this date even though there was global economic crisis which caused loss of employment and a drop in the income of the Non Residents.

Sir, in 2011-12 the foreign currency inflow was 66 billion US Dollars which comes to about Rs.3,30,000 crore. Lakhs of Indians are working abroad not because of pleasure but to get jobs to feed their families and thereby contributing to the income of our country. They are really serving the nation by giving foreign currency. Out of this huge foreign currency remittance major portion is by a majority of the unskilled and the semi-skilled labourers. But the burning issues which these NRIs are raising are not being addressed by the Government.

Sir, the most important issue is the introduction of a comprehensive Emigration Act. The first Act was enacted in 1922 that is at the time of the British Government. It was replaced in 1983. We know that there are many changes in the international sphere as also in India. So, there should be a change, and a new Act should be introduced giving protection to their remunerative working hours, safety, accommodation, legal aid and medical facility. The other most important issue is the traveling facility. Especially in Gulf countries the flight charge is really a very big issue. Air India and other private airlines are looting these people. We know that they are coming back after two or three years, maybe at the time of Christmas, Yeshua or Bakrid. In these days, the Air India and the private airlines are hiking their charges to a great extent. There is no reason, no norms or regulations to do that. The Government should interfere because these people are working in other countries for our country only.

It is estimated that there are about 10,000 Indians in foreign jails, especially in Gulf countries. They are not getting proper legal aid in time. The Government should take initiative and negotiate with these Governments. Proper arrangements should be made to provide them legal aid. Some mechanism can also be thought of to transfer these prisoners to our country because we are not the signatory of the SAARC Summit as far as the Gulf countries are concerned. If the Government of India take initiative we can help them to a great extent. So, the Government should take up all these issues.

Sir, when NRIs come back, especially when they have lost their jobs at the time of global recession, it is the duty of the Government to take care of them. As far as Kerala is concerned, it passed a Non-Resident Welfare Fund Act, 2008 giving assistance, pensions and also rehabilitation facilities. When foreign exchange comes to the Government of India through them, the Government has not thought of any package, any financial assistance for them. I urge upon the Government to take these issues seriously and give them proper help.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri A. Sampath is allowed to associate with the matter raised by Shri P. Karunakaran.