

(b) The Government has taken various measures for protecting the safety and welfare of women migrant workers of the ECR (Emigration Check Required) category who emigrate to 17 notified (ECR) countries. These include:-

- (i) Age restriction of 30 years has been made mandatory in respect of all such 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.
 - (v) The Ministry has set up the Overseas Workers Resource Centre (OWRC) with a 24x7 Helpline to enable emigrant workers/prospective emigrants including women to obtain information on all emigration related matters and to seek redressal of their complaint.
 - (vi) The Ministry undertakes Awareness Campaign through the print and electronic media to sensitize potential emigrant workers including women emigrants about the legal emigration process and hazards of illegal emigration.
 - (vii) Indian Community Welfare Fund has been established in all the Indian Embassies/Missions including all ECR countries. Financial assistance is provided by the Indian Missions out of this fund to all Indian emigrants who are stranded and are in need of assistance.
- (c) There is no such proposal with the Ministry.

Bilateral agreement for migrant labour

373. SHRI RAMA CHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether India has signed bilateral agreement on migrant labour with countries like Middle East, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and USA;
- (b) if so, whether labour are included;
- (c) the other steps that are being taken by Government of India for the protection of India migrant labour in other countries;

(d) whether some of Odisha migrant labour who were working in Sudan, Africa, South Africa died and some of them are also in very serious condition; and

(e) the steps Government is taking to bring them back ?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Yes Sir, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has entered into Bilateral Labour Agreements with UAE, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan and Malaysia.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has taken several initiatives for safeguarding the welfare and protection of Indian workers going abroad. These include the following :

(i) Establishment of Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) in the Indian Missions to provide immediate relief to the Indian workers in need and distress.

(ii) Overseas Workers Resource Centre (OWRC) at New Delhi. This centre has 24x7 helpline and walk-in counseling centre to provide information and to handle workers problems. This centre uses 8 Indian languages and has a toll free number.

(iii) Bilateral Social Security Agreements (SSA) for protection of the interests of Indian professionals going abroad.

(iv) Indian Workers Resource Centre (IWRC) at Dubai for providing information to the Indian workers and to handle their problems.

(d) Government has received report of 23 workers from Odisha deployed at the site of commissioning of a cement plant at Bangui, Central African Republic, living in poor and unhygienic conditions. In another case, workers from Odisha who were deployed for the execution of a power plant in Sudan, a project under execution by Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) have complained of harassment and non-payment of assured wages, food, shelter etc. and have requested for their repatriation.

Indian Embassy at Kinshasa has reported that Shri Narendra Malik had died of sickness on 24th June, 2011 in Bangui. Central African Republic is a malaria-prone country. Living conditions in the country are difficult and medical facilities are extremely poor.

(e) Embassy of India, Sudan has informed that of 216 workers. 198 have returned to India by 31.10.2010 and 18 workers have agreed to continue to work in Sudan. Regarding the 23 workers in Bangui, the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs had taken up the matter with the Indian Embassy, Kinshasa for their immediate and safe return to India. With the intervention of Embassy of India, Kinshasa, all the 23 workers have since been repatriated.