

Labour Cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia

2398. SHRI T. M. SELVAGANAPATHI:

DR. CHANDAN MITRA:

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

(a) whether India has signed a labour cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia, if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether the said agreement would cover about a quarter of the 28 lakh Indian expatriates working in Saudi Arabia; and

(c) whether it is also true that the said agreement could be the stepping stone for a more comprehensive pact covering all Indian workers in the Gulf Kingdom, if so, the details there of?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Yes Sir, India has signed labour cooperation for domestic service workers recruitment with Saudi Arabia. The agreement aims to protect the rights of employer and worker and regulate contractual relations between them. The agreement provides for standard employment contract, disposal of contractual disputes in fixed timeframe, fostering friendly relations between employer and the worker, and controlling recruitment cost in both countries. The agreement also defines responsibilities of both parties to the agreement, settlement of disputes and a Joint Committee for periodical review, assessment and monitoring of its implementation.

(b) The agreement would cover about 6 lakh workers.

(c) It is hoped that, the agreement will help in negotiating a comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding on manpower covering all categories of Indian workers in Saudi Arabia.

Illegal labourers in Middle East countries

2399. SHRI RAMA CHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether thousands of illegal labourers are still working in Middle East countries and some of them are inside the jail; and

(b) the strategy of Government of India to convert them as listed regular migrant labour and release those who are in jail?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Indian Mission in Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, have reported that there are cases of illegal migrant workers in the respective countries. However, exact number of such workers is not available. The number of Indians in jails as reported by the respective Missions is as under:

Sl. No.	Countries	Numbers of Indian
1	Saudi Arabia	approx. 1400
2	Oman	106
3	Yemen	02
4	Qatar	72
5	Lebanon	34
6	Jordan	02

In addition, there are 140 Indians lodged in deportation centres in Qatar. Mission in Saudi Arabia has reported that there may be some Indians who have been kept in deportation centres for completing formalities before they are deported to India.

(b) The Indian Missions take up the cases of illegal migrants with the competent authorities in the host countries with a view to either get them regularized or provide them safe passage back to India. They are also provided short term validity passports, if need be. During the grace period announced after Nitaqat in Saudi Arabia about 1.4 million Indians availed the concessions and regularised their status. About 60,000 Indian workers were issued emergency certificates. The Embassy officials regularly visit the jail/detention centre and provide consular assistance to the detainees. Efforts are made to seek their early release so that they do not languish in jails. Missions also coordinate with host countries to deport them to India after the punishment term is completed. Under Indian Community Welfare Fund, initial legal assistance is also provided to the deserving cases and penalties imposed on Indians may also be paid to get them released from detention centre/jail. Even Air fares are sometimes provided to the needy person out of Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF).