

(Himachal Pradesh), Shri Subhash Barala (Haryana), Shrimati Ramilaben Becharbhai Bara (Gujarat), Shri Maharaja Sanajaoba Leishemba (Manipur), Shri Sanjeev Arora (Punjab), Dr. Medha Vishram Kulkarni (Maharashtra), Shri Ram Chander Jangra (Haryana), Shri Neeraj Shekhar (Uttar Pradesh), Shrimati Sumitra Balmik (Madhya Pradesh), Shri Dhananjay Bhimrao Mahadik (Maharashtra), Dr. Kalpana Saini (Uttarakhand), Shri Deepak Prakash (Jharkhand), Shri Brij Lal (Uttar Pradesh), Dr. Sumer Singh Solanki (Madhya Pradesh), Dr. John Brittas (Kerala), Shrimati S. Phangnon Konyak (Nagaland), Dr. Fauzia Khan (Maharashtra), Dr. Sasmit Patra (Odisha) and Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla (Tamil Nadu).

Shri Santosh Kumar P. “Need to initiate comprehensive policies for the welfare of Indian Expatriates in GCC countries.”

Need to initiate comprehensive policies for the welfare of Indian Expatriates in the GCC Countries

SHRI SANDOSH KUMAR P (Kerala): Sir, the Gulf Cooperative Council, GCC, consists of six countries in the Middle East, and we have a very huge Indian population living in these countries; 93,72,076 is the exact number as per the answer furnished in this august house in December last year.

Sir, there is urgent need for a comprehensive and pragmatic policy for the *pravasi* community who are contributing immensely to strengthen the Indian economy. Out of these, 27 per cent are from Kerala. There are a lot of issues and concerns related to this *pravasi* community and I would like to point out some of the major issues. The first issue is related to the air fare. The hike in air fare, especially during the peak season, has become a menace to the *pravasi* community. This has become a source of exploitation for the aviation companies. Unfortunately, our Aviation Ministry has become a mute spectator to this exploitation. This issue has been raised quite a number of times in this august House and other forums, but we are nowhere near a solution. So, I take this opportunity to urge the Government, through you, Sir, to take necessary steps to control the air fare. Secondly, when a person dies in one of the GCC countries, the mortal remains must be taken back to the homeland. For that, Air India is charging double the fare that Air Arabia charges. For example, Air Arabia charges 1,910 Dinars whereas Air India charges double that amount. Thirdly, the ICWF, the Indian Community Welfare Fund, is a huge amount that is with the Indian embassies in the GCC countries, being collected in various forms. The embassies are flooded with funds, but it is unused and of no use.

Coming to the issue of voting by *pravasis*, we have to ensure that *pravasis* get to exercise their franchise. Sir, these are the major concerns. To address all these issues, we need a comprehensive, thorough policy which should be pragmatic as well.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI GHANSHYAM TIWARI): The following hon. Members associated themselves with the matter raised by the hon. Member, Shri Sandosh Kumar P: Dr. John Brittas (Kerala), Shrimati Jebi Mather Hisham (Kerala), Shri Jose K. Mani (Kerala), Dr. V. Sivadasan (Kerala), Shri Haris Beeran (Kerala), Shri A. A. Rahim (Kerala), Shri P. P. Suneer (Kerala), Dr. Fauzia Khan (Maharashtra), Shri Ritabrata Banerjee (West Bengal), Shri Saket Gokhale (West Bengal), Dr. Sasmit Patra (Odisha) and Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla (Tamil Nadu).

Shri Babubhai Jesangbhai Desai — ‘Demand for construction of an over-bridge at Railway Crossing No. 143 in Banaskantha District of Gujarat’ -- not present.
Shri Jose K. Mani — ‘Concern over Opening up the Country's Offshore Sand Blocks for Mining by Private Entities’.

Concern over opening up the country's offshore sand blocks for mining by private entities

SHRI JOSE K. MANI (Kerala): Sir, this is a serious concern for the State of Kerala, especially the coastal areas of Kerala, and also the country. Each legislation enacted or amended in this august House, especially for a huge capital investment project, is a deliberate and shameful attempt to prioritize corporate profit, forgetting the well being of the people. During 2023, the Offshore Areas Mineral Act was amended here. The motive behind the Amendment was to allow private players into offshore mining. This has opened the doors for unchecked exploitation of marine resources and the people. The Geological Survey of India has found about 745 million tonnes of sand near Kollam in Kerala, Kollam South, Kollam North, Allepy, Ponnani, Chavakkad. And, surprisingly, the Centre has already invited tenders of mining across 242 sq.km of Kollam coast. As we all know, whenever a huge capital investment is made and profit making projects are auctioned, it goes to one or two companies. All of us in the country know that.

Sir, we have discussed about the U.S. Administration deporting the Indian migrants to India. Now, this Government is going to deport 10 lakh fishermen from the coastal areas of Kollam. The venture is done without considering the State's interest and the impact on the environment and the marine world. Moreover, not a