



A third of workforce comes from other states

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Kochi: A sample study by the planning board has found that 30 per cent of the workers in different establishments in Kerala are people from other states. All establishments in building construction and restaurant sectors are run with migrant workers.

Of the 377 establishments covered in the study, workers from other states were found in 144 firms. In shops selling vegetables, fruits and fish and even in dry-cleaning establishments, up to 60 per cent of workers are from other states. In grocery stores, they form 75 per cent of the staff. Even in road-side food stalls, they form 50 per cent of the staff. In beauty parlours, 33 per cent of the staff is from other states, especially from the northeast. Masonry and carpentry have become their monopolies.

People from Bengal account for 20 per cent of this workforce and form the largest group. Others are mainly from Jharkhand, Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and north-eastern states. They make up 58.6 per cent of restaurant workers and 35.5 per cent of bakery staff.

Ninety-seven per cent of them send money home every month. Most of them send Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000 a month. Malayalis who do such work in the Gulf too send home less than Rs 15,000 per month.

A study conducted by Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation (GIFT) earlier had found that the migrant workers in Kerala were sending home about Rs 18,000 crore a year. The planning board's field study attests that finding.

Though Rs 75,000 crore comes to Kerala a year from different countries, including Gulf states, experts point out that the share of ordinary workers will not exceed Rs 20,000 crore. It means the money sent from Kerala by migrant workers and the money

remitted by expatriate Malayali workers to the state are almost equal. This raises a pertinent question as to why Malayalis should stay away from their families and struggle abroad. The GIFT study had found that the number of workers from other states could reach 48 lakhs.

However, some sectors in Kerala where migrant workers have no presence have also been found. They are pharmacies, jewelleryes and mobile shops. Pharmacies employ only Malayalis because north Indian workers neither have the qualification nor knowledge of medicines. Not only that, they need to know English and Malayalam well. Jewelleryes do not employ people from outside because of the lack of trust. And migrants do not have the technical knowhow to become mobile shop staff.

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