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India, Bahrain agree on action to curb human trafficking, help victims

By [Reuters](#)

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By Rina Chandran

MUMBAI, March 10 (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - India and Bahrain have agreed to take steps to curb human trafficking and cooperate more closely on the rescue and repatriation of victims, an official statement said on Thursday.

The memorandum of understanding is expected to be signed when Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh visits Bahrain in early April, and follows an anti-trafficking pact between India and Bangladesh last year, India's government press bureau said.

South Asia, with India at its centre, is the fastest-growing region for human trafficking in the world, and the second-largest after Southeast Asia, according to the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime.

More than 150,000 people are known to be trafficked within South Asia every year, but the trade is underground and the real number is likely to be much higher.

Under the bilateral accord, India and Bahrain will "increase bilateral cooperation on the issues of prevention, rescue, recovery and repatriation related to human trafficking, especially women and children expeditiously", the statement said.

India has said it is considering similar agreements to curb human trafficking with other Gulf nations and Nepal.

India is both a source and a transit country for trafficking to Bahrain. People from South Asia often migrate voluntarily to Bahrain and other Gulf nations for jobs as domestic workers or in the construction and hospitality industries.

After being promised good salaries and working conditions, some face forced labour after arriving in Bahrain - their passports are withheld, their movements restricted, their wages unpaid and they are subjected to threats and physical or sexual abuse.

Domestic workers are among the most exploited people in the world, and some Asian countries including Indonesia have proposed banning women from moving to the Middle East to do domestic work.

India and Bahrain will aim to ensure speedy investigation and prosecution of traffickers in either country. Measures will also be taken to prevent trafficking, and repatriation of victims will be done quickly, the statement said.

A joint task force with representatives from both sides will be set up to monitor the working of the memorandum.

(Reporting by Rina Chandran, editing by Tim Pearce. Please credit the Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters, that covers humanitarian news, women's rights, trafficking, corruption and climate change. Visit news.trust.org to see more stories.)

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