

## Saudi Arabia assures India of assistance to Indian workers

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Saudi Arabia has assured India of addressing difficulties being faced by retrenched Indians who were employed with construction giant Saudi Oger and Saad Group, the Gulf country's leading conglomerate.

Replying to a question in Lok Sabha, Minister of State for External Affairs V K Singh said Saudi Arabia has also conveyed to the government that it will extend exit visas to Indian workers, one way return ticket to India and will waive fines on resident permit.

"The Saudi authorities have assured us all possible assistance to the affected Indian workers of these companies including waiver of fines on Iqama (resident permit) related violations, providing exit visas and one way return tickets to India.

"The process of repatriation has already begun and 4,358 Indian workers have returned so far," Singh said.

Hundreds of Indian workers, employed with Saudi Oger and Saad Group, have lost their jobs primarily due to slowdown in Saudi economy, triggered by low oil prices and cut in spending by the government.

Singh said the Saudi authorities are also facilitating transfer of sponsorship, wherever possible, of the affected workers from their present company to other companies on gratis basis.

"A significant number of affected workers have also availed transfer of sponsorship to other companies," he said.

In reply to a separate question, Singh said an Overseas Workers Resource Centre (OWRC) in Gurgaon and an Indian Workers Resource Centre in Dubai have been helping the Indians intending to go abroad for livelihood as well as the overseas workers on all aspects of overseas employment.

"In addition, five Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) have been set up in Kochi, Hyderabad, Gurugram, Chennai and Lucknow to provide information and counselling for intending migrants about the procedure for legal migration and precautions to be taken while migrating," he said.

Singh said the Ministry has also approved setting up four such facilities in Riyadh, Jeddah, Sharjah and Kuala Lumpur.