

No restriction on migration to Gulf countries: Govt

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The government has not imposed any restriction on migration to Gulf countries, but it has advised Indians not to travel to Yemen, the Rajya Sabha was today informed.

It was done "in view of the security situation" in Yemen, said Gen (retd) V K Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs, in a written reply.

As the situation grew out of control following a civil war in Yemen, India evacuated 6700 people, including nationals of 41 countries, in April 2015 under 'Operation Raahat'. India also closed its embassy in Yemen after the operation.

In response to a sub-question, Singh said, the government is monitoring the situation arising from ongoing economic downturn in the Gulf countries and is working in close coordination with the governments in these states towards extending all possible assistance to Indian nationals abroad.

He said, a section of Indian workers presently facing difficulties in two major Saudi companies namely, Saudi Oger and the Saad Group are returning back to India.

"The process is nearing completion and 4,830 Indian workers have returned so far. The Saudi authorities are extending necessary support to the affected Indian workers of these companies including in waiver of fines on 'Iqama' (resident permit) related violations, providing exit visas and one way return tickets to India as well as transfer of sponsorship, wherever possible, on gratis basis," Singh said.

The minister said, the government has also taken several measures to safeguard the interests of Indian female workers migrating to Emigration Check Required (ECR) countries in view of complaints of exploitation and harassment of domestic sector workers by "unscrupulous" agents and employers in the Gulf countries.

As per the Emigration Act, 1983, (ECR) categories of Indian passport holders, require to obtain "Emigration Clearance" from the office of Protector of Emigrants (POE), Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs for going to some countries.

These countries are United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Malaysia, Libya, Jordan, Yemen, Sudan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Syria, Lebanon, Thailand, Iraq (emigration banned).

"As per extant guidelines, the minimum age of ECR category female workers proceeding for overseas employment to ECR countries is 30 years. Their emigration for overseas employment is permitted only through the six designated state- run recruitment agencies or through the Foreign Employer registered on e-Migrate system.

"In case of Foreign Employer, attestation of work contract by the Indian Mission in the destination country and submission of a bank guarantee of USD 2500 is mandatory before the emigration clearance is granted by the Office of Protector of Emigrants," Singh added.
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Responding to a separate question, Singh said, the

government has evacuated 22,603 people in relief operations conducted in seven countries in the last three years.

The countries are: Ukraine (1000 people), Iraq (7000) and Libya (3750) in 2014, Yemen (6700), Nepal (4000) in 2015 and 153 from Sudan in 2016.

In response to another question, Singh said, the scheme for providing legal/financial assistance to Indian women cheated, abandoned or abused by overseas Indian spouses is in operation in 13 countries namely USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Singapore, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Sixteen women have been provided relief under this scheme over the last three years with UK alone constituting 14 cases.