

Shocker for workers: Saudi kafils declare them 'wanted'

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HYDERABAD: Saudi 'kafils' are playing foul with Indians wanting to leave Saudi Arabia during the amnesty period and are creating hurdles for them to return.

A group of workers who completed all the formalities to leave Saudi Arabia were in for a rude shock when their employer declared them as 'Wanted'. The 90-day amnesty period began on March 29. Some workers from Hyderabad were astonished when they were informed by the embassy officials that their former employer had declared them as 'Matloob' ('Wanted') and therefore they would not be allowed to leave the country. Once the computer system shows that the worker is wanted by the sponsor, he is not allowed to exit. At the time of mentioning online that

the worker is 'Matloob', the employer does not even have to mention the reason why the worker is wanted and what his crime is.

According to sources in Saudi Arabia, the Hyderabad workers had completed their period of work with their employer and did not want to continue with him anymore. Technically, they did not have a work permit. If they continue to stay there without it, they are liable to be imprisoned. The workers did not want to take a chance.

They instead wanted to take advantage of the amnesty rather than stay there illegally. Those who leave during the amnesty will be allowed to return to work in Saudi Arabia.

In this particular case, the kafil made an 'Iqama' (work permit) with a backdate to show that the workers were still employed with

him and therefore could not leave the country. "It is clear that the kafil wants to treat them as bonded labour," a source said.

Taher Mohammed, a computer professional from Hyderabad who lives in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, is sparing time to assist Indians take advantage of the amnesty and return to the country. He is particularly helping Telugus to complete the formalities required to be able to go back to India without hassles. "Some of them are facing problems due to technical and legal issues," he said.

In one case, an employer was refusing to allow the worker to leave even though his iqama had expired. The threat issued to him was that he would be declared 'Matloob' and that would ensure that he did not leave Saudi Arabia and his stay would be illegal there.

The kafil would let him go only after he was given a certain amount of money. "It would be of great benefit to workers if the Telangana government took interest in the cases where workers have been declared 'Matloob'. The issue with the kafils should be solved and the return of workers should be facilitated," Taher Mohammed said.