

Telangana workers languish in Gulf countries, families helpless

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Daughter (left) and wife of Marampalli Naryana who has been jailed in Kuwait for taking up part time work. The family lives in Indalwai village of Nizamabad and are unable to help Naryana. (HT Photo)

The NDA government may have announced an action plan to rescue nearly 8,000 Indian workers in the Gulf countries, but there are thousands of other workers, mostly from Telangana, who are also stranded in the region.

Some of these workers from Telangana have been languishing in jails for violating labour contract rules and other petty complaints. Take the case of 52-year old Marampalli Naryana of Indalwai village of Nizamabad district, about 160 km away from Hyderabad. He had gone to Kuwait 18 years ago in search of a decent livelihood, but he was forced to work as a cleaner in a restaurant. About seven years ago, he shifted to another company as a labourer, but he was not paid properly.

In June, his wife M Shobha received a call stating that Narayana had been put behind the bars. Reason: he did a part time after the completion of his regular working hours in his present company. "Nobody is able to tell me how long he has to be in jail. His friends have expressed

helplessness in getting him out of jail, as they fear they might land in trouble if they intervene. He is a diabetic and I am worried about his health,” Shoba told HT.

Same is the fate of 45-year-old Kummari Ramulu of the same village. He went to Dubai three years ago when an agent promised him to secure a decent job. But after reaching there, he realised that the agent had cheated him, as he was engaged in a cattle farm. Since he had spent a lot of money to go there, he had no option but to stay back in Dubai doing the menial job to pool some money.

Back home, his 70-year-old mother Narasavva is crying, as she received a call a couple of months ago that Ramulu had been imprisoned for unknown reasons. “I am now begging on streets to survive,” she lamented.

More than 1,000 youth and middle-aged men left for Gulf countries from Indalwai, once infested with Maoists due to large scale unemployment. Most of them had migrated to Kuwait in search of jobs, while others have also left for Sharjah, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and Yemen. Apparently, they were lured by some “agents” from Mumbai who promised them nice jobs with fat salaries.

However, when they went there, they had to see a different world. They were engaged in unskilled jobs like manual labourers in construction sector, cleaners and sweepers in hotels and restaurants and even as domestic servants. With their employers snatching away their passports and paying them very meagre salaries, they are compelled to live in pathetic working conditions.

“Many small-time companies in the Gulf do not have proper licences; so, when they are closed down due to slump in economy, there is no one to take care of workers. Even the Indian embassy is not bothered,” says Y Shyam Sunder from Nizamabad town, who had returned from Dubai after working there for 11 years. “I was in Bahrain for a year doing construction work. There is no proper accommodation for Indian workers. They are crammed in a shed which has no proper toilet and drinking water facilities. Even if a person dies of sickness, the authorities do not make any arrangements to send the dead bodies to their native places,” Shyam said.

Most of those who migrated to the Gulf are from northern Telangana districts of Nizambad, Karimnagar and Adilabad. Though they want to return to India following shut down of their companies, they cannot because their passports are impounded by their employers. In many cases, the workers are not even aware that the validity of their passports has expired and they are overstaying in the Gulf countries.

The Telangana government has recently set up an NRI wing, headed by minister for IT and NRI affairs K T Rama Rao, who held a series of meetings with officials to chalk out a plan to rescue workers who are stranded in the Gulf.

“The government is spending crores on redesigning irrigation projects in Telangana, besides taking up several infrastructure projects. If the local youth are provided work in these projects, there is no need for them to migrate to the Gulf countries for jobs,” said Indalwai sarpanch P Kumar.

According to Rajiv Trivedi, Principal Secretary, Home, the number of migrants from various parts of Telangana to different Gulf countries could be around 10 lakh. "The state government does not have the exact data bank of the Gulf migrants, as they have not gone through a single source. They went to the Gulf countries through various agencies in Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru," Trivedi told HT.