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Agreement on Labour Cooperation for Domestic Service Workers Recruitment Between India and Saudi Arabia

India and Saudi Arabia have signed an agreement on Labour Cooperation for Domestic Service Workers Recruitment. The agreement was signed in New Delhi today by Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs Sh. Vayalar Ravi and Minister for Labour of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Mr. Adel Bin Mohammed Fakeih.

Salient Features of the Agreement are:

- i. It aims to protect the right of both the employers and domestic service workers and regulate the contractual relation between them.
- ii. It endeavors to control recruitment costs in both countries.
- iii. It ensures recruitment of domestic sector workers directly or through registered recruitment agencies.
- iv. It ensures authenticity and implementation of employment contract between the employer and the domestic workers.
- v. It ensures legal measures against recruitment agencies in violation of the laws of either country.
- vi. It ensures that recruitment agencies and the employer shall not charge or deduct from the salary of the domestic worker any cost attendant to his/her recruitment and deployment.
- vii. It ensures that recruitment agencies and the employer do not impose any kind of unauthorized salary deduction.
- viii. It works towards fostering a harmonious relationship between the employer and the domestic workers.
- ix. It facilitates the opening by the employer of a bank account under the name of the domestic sector workers.
- x. It endeavors to establish a mechanism to provide 24 hours assistance to the domestic sector workers.
- xi. It facilitates the issuance of exit visas for the repatriation of domestic sector workers upon contract completion or in any emergency situation or as the need arises.
- xii. A standard employment contract would be finalized that would provide minimum wage, working hours, paid holidays and dispute settlement mechanism.

This is the first step towards a comprehensive agreement on labour cooperation covering the entire spectrum of Indian workers in Saudi Arabia.

The agreement was conceptualized during the visit of Sh. Vayalar Ravi to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in April 2013, where both the ministers had agreed to hold discussions and finalize it at an early date.

Sh. Ravi thanked the Saudi authorities for announcing grace period from April 2013 to November, 2013 allowing overstaying expatriate workers to correct their status or to return to their country without penal action. More than 1.4 million Indians have availed the concessions during the grace period to correct their status.

There are about 28 lakh Indians in Saudi Arabia and they constitute the biggest group of migrant communities . Indians are the most preferred community in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia due to their hard work and discipline.

The Saudi labour minister's Mr. Fakieh called on the Vice President of India in the morning today and is scheduled to meet the Minister of External Affairs tomorrow.

MKP/SKM/AK