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Away from home: On the plight of the Indian worker

The story of 16 Indian workers allegedly deceived into working under inhumane conditions in Libya highlights the persistent issue of labour exploitation faced by millions of Indians abroad. According to government reports, these workers, who had travelled to the United Arab Emirates for employment, were later **coerced** into relocating to Benghazi, Libya, to work in a cement factory. While the Indian mission has been providing them with food and supplies, the workers cannot leave without the necessary exit permits. This incident is far from isolated. In June, a fire at a labour camp in Mangaf, Kuwait, claimed the lives of at least 40 Indians. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Kuwait has **brought attention** to the **plight** of Indian workers, particularly those in labour camps. Despite Mr. Modi's acknowledgment of Kuwait's support for its over one-million-strong Indian community, the dangers faced by Indian workers remain a concern. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, there are around 13 million Indian nationals abroad, with most in the Gulf countries. These workers, who lack eligibility for citizenship in their host countries, contribute significantly to India's economy through **remittances** — about \$111 billion in 2022. However, their personal gains are often limited.

Many are burdened by recruitment fees, loans for travel and relocation, and exploitative work conditions such as the kafala system in the Gulf countries.

The Indian government has made attempts to regulate labour migration. The introduction of the e-Migrate system over a decade ago for workers travelling to 18 countries requiring Emigration Clearance (ECR) was a **step forward**. However, labour contractors and agents, operating in international networks, often **circumvent** these safeguards. Moreover, these protections do not extend to non-ECR countries such as Israel and Russia, where Indian workers have faced **dire** consequences, including death in conflict zones. Reforming India's Emigration Act, stricter monitoring of recruitment agents, and demanding higher compensation guarantees from foreign employers are necessary. Yet, a more sustainable solution lies in **fostering** equitable economic growth in India. Ultimately, in cases like that of the workers in Libya, the government is often left with no choice but to **repatriate** them. However, many return to a bleak future. For most, the harsh realities of life overseas still appear preferable. Rather than merely celebrating the success of its diaspora, India must use platforms such as the Pravasi Bharatiya Sammelan to address the struggles of these workers. Their plight remains in **stark contrast** to India's growing economic and diplomatic ambitions on the global stage.

Vocabulary –

1. Coerced (Verb) (विवश करना)

Meaning: Persuaded or forced to do something by using threats or pressure.

Synonyms: Compelled, forced, pressured

Antonyms: Allowed, permitted, freed

Example: The workers were coerced into relocating to Libya.

2. Plight (Noun, Verb) (दुर्दशा)

Meaning: A dangerous, difficult, or otherwise unfortunate situation.

Synonyms: Predicament, hardship, trouble

Antonyms: Fortune, blessing, comfort

Example: The Prime Minister acknowledged the plight of Indian workers abroad.

3. Travails (noun) संघर्ष

Meaning= painful or laborious effort.

Synonym: Hardships, ordeals

Antonym: Ease, comfort

Sentence: His travails in the early years of his career are now legendary in the industry.

4. Remittance (noun) प्रेषण

Meaning= a sum of money sent in payment or as a gift.

Synonym: Payment, transfer

Antonym: Receipt, collection

Sentence: Many immigrants send remittances back to their families in their home countries.

5. Circumvent (Verb) (चकमा देना)

Meaning: To find a way around an obstacle or avoid a rule cleverly.

Synonyms: Evade, bypass, dodge

Antonyms: Adhere, comply, confront

Example: Agents often circumvent regulations to exploit workers.

6. Repatriate (Verb) (स्वदेश वापस भेजना)

Meaning: To send someone back to their own country.

Synonyms: Return, restore, deport

Antonyms: Retain, keep

Example: Many workers were repatriated due to unsafe conditions abroad.

7. Deceive (verb) धोखा देना

Meaning= to make someone believe something that is not true .

Synonym: Mislead, delude

Antonym: Enlighten, inform

Example: It's wrong to deceive people into buying faulty products.

8. Foster (Verb) प्रोत्साहन देना या विकास करना

Meaning – To encourage, promote, or support the development or growth of something.

Synonyms –Encourage, Promote, Support, Nurture.

Antonyms –Discourage, Neglect, Suppress, Hinder, Impede

Example: The teacher worked hard to foster a love of reading in her students.

9. Dire (Adjective) गंभीर, भयावह, विनाशकारी, or आपातकालीन

Meaning - Extremely serious or urgent.

- Causing great fear, worry, or suffering.

- Indicating trouble or disaster.

Synonyms – Disastrous, Serious, Urgent.

Antonyms – Reassuring, Unimportant, Safe.

Example – The patient was in dire need of medical attention after the accident.

10. Allegedly (Adverb) (कथित रूप से" या "माना जाता है कि" /

Meaning- The word “allegedly” is used to indicate that something is claimed or reported to be the case, but there is no definitive proof yet.

Synonyms – Supposedly, Reportedly, Purportedly, Ostensibly.

Antonyms – Certainly, Definitely, Undeniably, Confirmedly.

Example – The celebrity allegedly evaded taxes, but no charges have been filed yet.

Idioms & Phrases

1. Brought attention to:

Meaning - Highlighted or made people aware of an issue.

2. Step forward:

Meaning - A move in a positive or progressive direction

3. Stark contrast:

Meaning - A clear and striking difference.