

Media for Migrants

A one day seminar Organised by Kesari Memorial Journalist Trust, Trivandrum and CIMS Centre for Indian Migrant Studies and ILO.

Rafeek Ravuther, director of the Centre for Indian Migrants' Studies (CIMS) said in his welcome speech about Indian media, which enjoys a great deal of freedom, could help millions of migrants who were denied basic rights. India government was the first to oppose the law for domestic workers at international labour organisations Geneva Convention 183 in May 2011. Still nobody from the media took this issue to the society. India is the largest supplier of human resource to the Middle East. We rely on their money but we never give back protection they deserve.

We must be aware of the terminologies revived internationally, in addressing migrants. Authorities are still using the term house maid, but it is changed to domestic workers, to attain respect to that category of workers. Likewise illegal migrant is replaced with undocumented migrants, because nobody is illegal.

Norka CEO **C R Kannan** said journalists should try their best to bring to light the challenges faced by migrant workers. Inaugurating the seminar, Kannan asked scribes to monitor the implementation of policies meant for migrants and follow up on causes related to violation of their rights.

The Gulf Keralite is the one who watches critically every movement of his home land that is Kerala. Law enforcement of Gulf courtiers are very much gruesome and it really creating great pain for our migrant workers from India. We should be aware of the fact that every nation has sovereignty and a migrant worker is bound oblige to it. To respond effectively to migrants human right violations issue the government need first-hand information. The media is the one who can provide the balanced coverage of the event, so that the authorities may act immediately. Kerala is the first state, which created department for migrants and a Minister's portfolio in India. The reason is Malayali is the largest expatriate community in Middle East and also the government is concerned about these migrants. The money they are sending back home is the back born of our economy.

We are proud of the persons and especially organisations that work relentlessly for the upheaval of expatriates, because a government has certain limitations in intervene in another nation's sovereignty. These good samaritans often forgetting their own responsibilities as workers and responds effectively to give helping hand to needy persons.

The real malice in culpung migrant issues is the lack of awareness by the intending migrant. Even if the government provides information on the reality and analysis on the job opportunities in Middle East only few people attain it from our NORKA offices toll free number. Without valid information the candidate falls into the hands of middleman who are actually illegal human traffickers.

Isaac John Pattaniparambil of Khaleej Times said migrants in Gulf countries didn't face severe problems as portrayed by a section of media. He compared the living and working conditions of farmers in India with that of construction workers in the UAE and claimed that migrants enjoyed the incentives offered to them and were completely satisfied with the life they led.

Participants, however, confronted him with a volley of questions with critics pointing out that he had turned a blind eye to the victims of double contract, debt bondage, Kafala (sponsorship) system and fake visa agents. Some said migrant workers were subject to exploitation and atrocities in many

places, particularly in some of the Gulf countries. The critical eye of the media could do much to improve the situation.

Kesari Memorial Journalists' Trust president Siby Kattampally, former Quatar-based journalist P V George and Malayalam News special correspondent C Rahim spoke. The seminar was organized by the Kesari JournalistTrust and CIMS with the support of ILO India office's SALM (South Asian Labor Migration Project).