

PRE DEPARTURE TRAINING MANUAL

For Intending Emigrants

BAHRAIN

Part – I

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR OVERSEAS MIGRANTS

Definition

Emigration, in this context, means the departure of any person from India with a view to taking up any employment (whether or not under an agreement or other arrangements to take up such employment, with or without the assistance of a registered Recruiting Agent or employer) in any country or place outside India.

The Present Situation

Every year hundreds of thousands of Indians emigrate in search of job. The effect of economic liberalization in India is visible on labour migration too. One of the striking features of labour migration from India is that more than 90 percent of the total outflow is to the Middle East.

The Emigration Act

The Emigration Act, 1983, seeks to safeguard the interests and ensure the welfare of emigrants. Only the recruiting agents registered with the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs are eligible as per the Act to conduct the business of recruitment for overseas employment and they are required to obtain proper Registration Certificates (RC) from the Protector General of Emigrants.

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, administers the Emigration Act through the eight offices of Protector of Emigrants (POEs). The offices are located at Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Chandigarh, Cochin, Hyderabad and Thiruvananthapuram.

Service Charge

No recruiting agent shall collect from the worker the charges more than the equivalent of his wages for forty-five days as offered under the employment contract, subject to a maximum of **Rs 20,000/-(Rs Twenty thousand rupees)**, in respect of the services provided and shall issue a receipt to that worker for the amount collected in this regard.

Emigration Check Required (ECR) Category

Categories of persons, whose passports have been endorsed as “Emigration Check Required” (ECR), if intending to travel to an ECR country (Listed on page 3) for employment purposes, are required to obtain emigration from the Protector of Emigrants (POEs) either directly or through the recruitment agents or through the employer concerned.

Emigration Check Not Required (ECNR) Category

Section 22 of the Emigration Act, 1983 provides that no citizen of India shall migrate unless he obtains authorization from the concerned POE in the prescribed manner and form. However, with a view to facilitating the movement of the workers, 13 categories of persons (listed later in this chapter) have been exempted from this requirement and have been placed under “Emigration Check Not Required’ (ECNR) category. Such persons are not

required to obtain any emigration clearance from the offices of POEs before seeking employment abroad.

Countries with ECR / ECNR status

There are total of 175 countries (called as ECNR countries) do not require emigration clearance, whereas 17 countries are listed as emigration check required countries, they are listed below:

List of Countries for which Emigration Clearance is Required (ECR)

1. Afghanistan
2. Bahrain
3. Indonesia
4. Iraq
5. Jordan
6. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
7. Kuwait
8. Lebanon
9. Libya
10. Malaysia
11. Oman
12. Qatar
13. Sudan
14. Syria
15. Thailand
16. United Arab Emirates
17. Yemen

List of Persons/Categories of Workers in whose case Emigration Check is Not Required

1. All holders of Diplomatic/ Official Passports
2. All Gazetted Government Servants
3. All Income-tax payers (including agricultural income tax payers) in their individual capacity
4. All professional degree holders, such as Doctors holding MBBS degrees or Degrees in Ayurveda or Homeopathy; Accredited journalists; Engineers; Chartered Accountants; Lecturers; Teachers; Scientists; Advocates etc.
5. Spouses and dependent children of category of persons listed from (2) to (4).
6. Persons holding class 10 qualification or higher degrees.

7. Seamen who are in possession of CDC or Sea Cadets, Desk Cadets (i) who have passed final examination of three year B.Sc. Nautical Sciences Courses at T S Chanakya, Mumbai; and (ii) who have undergone three months pre-sea training at any of the government approved Training Institutes such as T S Chanakya, T S Rehman, T S Jawahar, MTI (SCI) and NIPM, Chennai after production of identity cards issued by the Shipping Master, Mumbai/ Kolkata/ Chennai
8. Persons holding permanent immigration visas, such as the visas of UK, USA and Australia.
9. Persons possessing two years' diploma from any institute recognized by the national Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) or State Council of Vocational Training (SCVT) or persons holding three years' diploma/equivalent degree from institutions like polytechnics recognized by Central/State Governments.
10. Nurses possessing qualifications recognized under the Indian Nursing Council Act, 1947.
11. All persons above the age of 50 years.
12. All persons who have been staying abroad for more than three years (the period of three years could be either in one stretch or broken) and spouses.
13. Children below 18 years of age.

Guidelines for Emigration Clearance

The procedure for emigration clearance has been simplified. Emigration clearance to individuals/groups is granted on the same day on which the application is made at any of the offices of the Protector of Emigrants (POE).

Procedure for Emigration Clearance

- 1) Emigration clearance will be made on the passport when the individual approaches either directly or through a registered Recruiting Agent or through the employer concerned.
- 2) In cases in which the profession indicated in visa does not tally with the profession indicated in the passport, an affidavit may be obtained from the Recruiting Agent/Employer concerned.
- 3) No clearance may be given for Iraq unless specifically authorized by Indian Embassy in Iraq.
- 4) No emigration clearance shall be granted for recruiting Indian nationals for any Foreign Employer placed in 'Prior Approval Category' (PAC)

Applying for Emigration Clearance

The application for emigration clearance should be made in the prescribed form with prescribed particulars by the applicant directly or through a Recruiting Agent or through the employer concerned to the POE.

Documents required for Semi-Skilled Workers

Semi-skilled individuals who seek emigration clearance directly from the Protectors of Emigrants (and not through Recruiting Agents) are required to produce the following documents in original for scrutiny and return:

- 1) Passport valid for a minimum period of six months with valid visa.
- 2) Employment contract from foreign employer duly attested by the Indian Mission.
- 3) Challan towards deposit of prescribed fee.
- 4) Valid Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Policy

Documents required for Unskilled Workers

Unskilled workers and women (not below 30 years of age) seeking employment abroad as housemaids/ domestic workers shall continue to furnish (in original) the following documents at the time of obtaining emigration clearance:

- 1) Passport valid for a minimum period of six months with valid Visa.
- 2) Work agreement from the foreign employer duly attested by the Indian Mission and signed by employer and employee or Permission letter from the concerned Indian Mission/ Post.
- 3) Challan towards deposit of prescribed fee.
- 4) Valid Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Policy
- 5) Approval of the Ministry, if the female worker is below 30 years of age.

Documents required for Emigration Clearance (Through Project Exporter)

1. Valid Passport (Valid for at least 6 months)
2. Valid visa in English language.
3. Permit issued by Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, with effective date of validity.
4. Valid Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Policy
5. Valid Bank Guarantee

The Protector of Emigrants (POE) shall, after satisfying himself about the accuracy of the particulars mentioned in the application and in the other documents submitted along with

the application, grants emigration clearance in the prescribed manner and form. In case there is any deficiency, the POE shall intimate the same by order in writing to the applicant or, as the case may be, the Recruiting Agent or employer, through whom the applications have been made about the deficiencies and require him to make good such deficiencies within such time as may be specified in the order or reject the application.

Details of the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY)

- The Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY) was started in 2003. The PBBY was upgraded as the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana, 2006 to provide broader coverage to the emigrant workers.
- The scheme has been further modified in 2008. The emigrant workers get a minimum insurance cover of Rs. 10 lakhs (instead of Rs. 5 lakhs) and the policy will be for the period of employment contract, i.e. either 2 years or 3 years as the case may be. The reduced premium along with other benefits have been made effective from 01.04.08.
- A comparative statement of PBBY 2006 and PBBY 2008 is as under:

Item	PBBY 2006	PBBY 2008
Minimum sum for which insured under PBBY	Rs. 5.00 Lakhs	Rs. 10.00 Lakhs
Hospitalization (Medical Expenses) Covering injuries / sickness / ailment / diseases	Rs. 50,000/-	Rs. 75,000/-
Repatriation covers for medical unfit	Actual one-way economy class air fare	Actual one-way economy class air fare
Family Hospitalization in India	Rs. 25,000/-	Rs. 50,000/-
Maternity	Rs. 20,000/-	Rs. 25,000/-
Attendant	Actual one-way economy class air fare	Actual one-way economy class air fare
Legal Expenses	Rs. 25,000/-	Rs. 30,000/-
Actual Premium to be charged (without any hidden costs)	Rs. 475/- for the contract period	Rs. 275/- for 2 years policy period. Rs. 375/- for 3 years policy period.

This policy is available from undernoted Insurance Companies:-

1. Oriental Insurance Company Ltd.
2. United Insurance Company Ltd.
3. National Insurance Company Ltd.
4. ICICI Lombard.
5. Star Health & Allied Insurance Co. Ltd.
6. IFFCO Tokyo
7. Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Co. Ltd.
8. Reliance General Insurance Co. Ltd.

Claim Procedure

Insured worker is supposed to have the copy of PBBY insurance policy with him. Name of the nominee is so mentioned on the policy, in view of the eventuality of death of insured.

In the event of claim, insured worker/claimant has to lodge a claim under the policy, with the respective insurance company's office wherefrom the policy was issued, if not specifically provided by the insurance company otherwise. While doing so, claimant has to indicate the policy number and details of accident. In the event of death, nominee has to lodge the claim.

After intimation of reported claim, insurance company intimates the insured/claimant the details of documents required to settle the claim. After processing such requisite documents, claim amount is paid to the insured worker/claimant, as the case may be.

Do's and Don't Do's

In Bahrain, laws demand that you must not move about in public without your CPR card. CPR cards are identity cards issued to all expatriates soon after they settle down on their jobs.

Bahrain does allow change in job sponsorship. However, it is practice that such change is allowed only after completion of initial contract period and after following proper mobility procedures as prescribed by LMRA.

- The emigrant workers must get their service agreements prepared in both English and Arabic. They should not part with their passports and copies of the service contracts.
- Non-payment or delayed payment of wages could be reported to Indian missions, for redressal of grievances.
- Workers are given gratuity equivalent to 15 days' wages for every completed year of service after completion of initial contract period of two years.

Verification of the genuineness of visa/an employment documents

The matter may be referred to the Embassy of India in the destination country, if necessary, with full particulars of the sponsor company (Name, Address, Telephone and Fax No.) which issued the visa, along with Passport particulars. Website of the Embassy of Bahrain has a pre-departure advisory, which should be followed for verification of employment.

Fate of Indian Nationals with 'Visit visa'

Some companies issue 'Visit Visa' (commercial 'visit visa') to meet their urgent manpower requirement for short-term work. After the work is finished, workers are allowed to come back to the home country. In case the employer needs them for further period; employer may arrange employment visa for such workers.

Visit visa is different from employment visa and it is not covered by the labour laws of the destination countries. Therefore visit visa workers do not have legal rights.

Employment Contract

Indian workers are advised to obtain written contract duly signed by the sponsor / employer company before their arrival in the destination country.

The official language of the contract recognized by the Gulf countries is Arabic. In a bilingual contract (English and Arabic), the Arabic version prevails in case of any dispute on the clauses of the contract.

Essential terms for a contract

The contract should contain all-important terms of employment as per 15(2) of Emigration Rules.

- (i) Period of employment/place of employment;
- (ii) Wages and other conditions of service;
- (iii) Free food or food allowance provision;
- (iv) Free accommodation;
- (v) Provision in regard to disposal, or transportation to India, of dead body of the emigrant;
- (vi) Working hours, overtime allowance, other working conditions, leave and social security benefits as per local labour laws;
- (vii) To-and-fro air-passage at the employers' cost; and
- (viii) Mode of settlement of disputes;

Obtaining copy of the contract while in India

As per the instructions of the Government of India, recruitment agents are expected to provide a copy of employment contract to each worker before his/her departure. To safeguard his/her own interest, an individual worker has to demand from the recruitment agent a copy of the duly signed contract before departure. Complaints may be lodged against defaulting agencies with the nearest Protector of Emigrants.

Since employer has already submitted a work contract to LMRA before issue of a work visa, recruitment agent may be asked to obtain a copy of that contract duly attested by the local authority (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in Bahrain.

Embassy may be consulted before signing any work contract having punitive clauses concerning mid-term resignation / repatriation or change of job.

Important Documents

In addition to all the originals, copies of the following documents may be retained with the employee.

1. Employment contract,
2. Passport,
3. Visa and
4. Certificates of educational qualification

Guidelines for those Emigrating through RAs

- Be sure of your Recruiting Agent. Ask him to show his Registration Certificate issued by the Protector General of Emigrants, Govt. of India. Do not deal with him unless he is registered and the registration is valid. In case of doubt, check with any of the offices of the Protectors of Emigrants (POEs) or the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE).
- DO NOT deal with sub-agents as they are not permitted under the Emigration Act, 1983 and Rules.
- Ask the Recruiting Agent to show you the Demand Letter and Power of Attorney from the foreign employer.
- Also carefully go through the Employment Contract detailing the salary/wage levels and other service conditions.
- DO NOT pay the Agent anything other than the service charge more than the equivalent of his wages for forty-five days as offered in the employment contract, subject to a maximum of twenty thousand.
- Make payments preferably by Demand Draft or Cheque and obtain a receipt.

Complaints of overcharging or cheating can be lodged with the concerned POE or with the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE).

Check before Departure

- Ensure you have a valid Passport at least for Two year. A valid Visa must be either stamped on or accompany your Passport. Always keep a photocopy of your Passport and Visa.
- You must possess a copy of the Employment Contract signed by you and your foreign employer duly attested by the registered recruiting agent. Also insist on the copy of employment contract, submitted by the employer to LMRA before issue of work visa, duly attested by the local authority in Bahrain.
- Insist on a copy of Employment Contract in English duly authenticated by the recruiting agent.
- Open a Savings Bank N.R.E. Account in one of the Banks in India to enable you to send your remittances from abroad.
- Get familiar with local labour laws, working and living conditions of the country of employment. Keep complete address of the Indian Embassy there, with you.

In the Country of your Employment

- Obtain a Resident Permit or CPR card.
- DO NOT part with your Passport and copy of Employment Contract signed by you in India.
- DO NOT sign any other Employment Contract or any blank paper.
- DO NOT strike work or resort to agitations. These are illegal under Bahrain's labour laws. You could be arrested, imprisoned and also deported.
- AVOID all contacts that may result in AIDS – a dreaded disease.

- Keep in touch with the nearest Indian Mission and report any complaints about non-payment or delayed payment of wages or compensations or any other problem to the Indian Mission.

Customs Formalities

- Personal baggage – Customs checking is VERY STRICT. Kindly co-operate with the Customs staff at the International Airport.
- Ensure that you do not carry any narcotics or alcoholic drinks. Alcohol is strictly prohibited. Its consumption is a serious offence attracting severe punishment.
- DO NOT accept any unchecked parcel from any one. If you have to take a parcel for someone, check thoroughly that it does not contain alcohol or narcotics. Otherwise, it may land you in serious difficulties on arrival in the country of employment.
- Do not carry 'Khas Khas seeds ', which is a banned item in Bahrain.

Precautions

- You must make and keep a photocopy of all the pages of your Passport. DO NOT lose your Passport or its photocopy.
- In case you misplace your Passport, inform the nearest Indian Mission immediately giving them details, i.e. Passport number, date and place of issue, your name and date of your entry in to the country of employment. You can give these details only if you keep a photocopy of your Passport.
- DO NOT lose your copy of Employment Contract. Make photocopies and keep them with you always.
- You must have a full name, address, telephone/fax number of your foreign employer, before you leave India.
- If you have difficulty in locating your foreign employer, contact the nearest Indian Mission immediately.
- DO NOT accept temporary or permanent employment with another person or establishment other than the sponsoring Company/ establishment/ person. Employment with persons other than your original sponsor is strictly prohibited and attracts severe punishment.
- Before the Visa or Employment Contract expires, get them renewed. If you are returning to India for a short while during the tenure of your Employment Contract abroad, ensure that the validity period of Visa does not expire before you return to the country of employment.
- Ensure also that your Passport is valid. Get it revalidated from the concerned Indian Mission abroad or from the Regional Passport Office (RPO) in India, at least two months before its expiry.

Embassy of India

Building 182, Road 2608,
Area 326
Ghudaibiya, P.O. Box No. 26106,
Adliya, Bahrain
Ph : +973-712683,712649,
712785,713832
Fax : +973-715527

The Consular Wing

(Ground Floor of the Embassy building)
Building No. 182, Road 2608,
Area 326, Ghudaibiya,
P.O. Box 26106,
Adliya, Bahrain

Enquiry

General Enquiry +973 17712683
Second Secretary (Consular & Labour) +973 17714209 (Direct)
Attache (Consular) +973 17712793 (Direct)

Important Contacts

Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs
Government of India
Akbar Bhavan,
Chanakya Puri,
New Delhi-110021

Telephone No 91-11-24197900
Fax No: 91-11-24197919.
Email: info@moia.nic.in

Shri Vayalar Ravi
Minister
Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs

Ph. (O) 91-11-24676836 / 37 / 39
Fax (O) 91-11-24197985
Email: minister@moia.nic.in
Ph (R) 91-11-23792148 / 49
Fax (R) 91-11-23792142

Dr. A. Didar Singh
Secretary,
Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs

Ph: 91-11-24674143 / 44
Fax: 91-11-24674140
Email : secretary@moia.nic.in

Shri Karan A. Singh
Protector General of Emigrants
Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs

Ph: 91-11-26874250
Fax: 91-11-24197984
Email: pge@moia.nic.in

List of Offices of Protector of Emigrants in India

1. Protector of Emigrants, New Delhi
Jaisalmer House, Canteen Block,
Mansigh Road, New Delhi 110001.
Ph. 011 – 23382472
Fax 011 – 23073908
2. Protector of Emigrants Bombay,
Building E, Khira Nagar,
S V Road, Santa Cruz (West), Mumbai, 400054.
Ph. 022 – 26614393

Fax: 022 – 26614353

3. Protector of Emigrants Thiruvananthapuram,
Sugandh, 24/846 (1), Thycaud,
Thiruvananthapuram – 695014.
Ph. 0471 – 2741790
4. Protector of Emigrants Kochi,
3rd Floor, Putherikal Building,
Market Road, Kochi 682035.
Ph. 0484 – 2360187
5. Protector of Emigrants, Chennai,
TNHB, Ashok Nagar Shopping Complex (Annexe)
Ashok Nagar, Chennai 600083,
Ph. 044 – 24891337
6. Protector of Emigrants Chandigarh,
Kendriya Sadan
Fifth Block, Ground Floor,
Sector 9A, Chandigarh- 160017.
Ph. 0172 – 2741790
7. Protector of Emigrants Kolkata,
Room No: 18, A–Wing,
3rd Floor, M S O Building, D F Block,
Salt Lake, Kolkata 700084.
Ph. 033 – 23343407
8. Protector of Emigrants Hyderabad,
Gruhkalpa, Ground Floor
Opposite to Gandhi Bhawan,
Nampally, Hyderabad.
Ph: 040 - 24652557

Information Available on the Website of MOIA

- Revised emigration requirements
- Recruiting agents having suspended RC
- Online emigration clearance system
- List of Registered recruiting agents with valid RC at poeonline.gov.in
- Internal watch-list of recruiting agents
- Recruiting agents having cancelled RC
- Foreign employers on PAC
- Project Exporters at poeonline.gov.in
- Emigration Act, 1983
- Emigration Rules, 1983

- Pravsi Bharatiya Bima Yojana
- Redressal of Public Grievances Information on Recruiting Agents and Black Listed Foreign Employers
- Guidelines for recruiting agents/guidelines for prospective Emigrant workers.

Working days & hours for consular services

Sunday to Thursday

Submission of applications: 08:30 hours - 1200 hours (Subject to availability of tokens)

Delivery of serviced passports & documents: 1500 hours - 1600 hours

Consultation with Public

PGE conducts Public Hearings in the office of the Protector of Emigrants, Jaisalmer House, Canteen Block, Mansingh Road, New Delhi between 3.00 PM to 4.00 PM. on all Tuesdays where members of the public could come with their grievances/suggestions without any appointment.

Information under RTI Act

For information (under the RTI Act, 2005) citizens may approach the Public Information Officer (RTI) of Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs available from 10:00 hrs to 13:00 hrs on each day (except Monday and Friday). The information pertaining to MOIA is also available on the MOIA Website (<http://www.moia.gov.in>) in detail. Further, the citizens may also approach the PIO (RTI) using email addresses dsfs@moia.nic.in & dsemigration@moia.nic.in.

Part – II

BAHRAIN

Location and size

Bahrain is a small monarchy of desert plains about 700 square kilometres in area, consisting of 36 islands located at the eastern coast of the Persian Gulf, on the east of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Four of these islands connected by causeways together account for 95 percent of the land area of the Kingdom of Bahrain. Saudi Arabia and Bahrain are also interconnected by a causeway. It is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council which has six member countries, the others being Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Climate

Bahrain is situated at 26° North Latitude, three hours ahead of GMT. It has a varied topography ranging from rocky deserts to lush green vegetation, sandy beaches, traditional architecture and parks. Year-round fine weather offers scope for a wide range of leisure time activities on land and sea. The best climatic conditions in Bahrain are from November to March. During December and March, evenings are cool. From May to September, days could be hot and humid, with hot, dry winds and sandstorms. Sunglasses would be of help during summer days.

Bahrain has a very hot and humid climate during the months of May to September ranging from 30° to 40° Celsius. In the rest of the months the maximum temperature is in the range of 20° to 30° Celsius. Rainfall is low.

History

Bahrain has a history of about 5000 years and is famed as a trading centre between India and the Middle East. In the course of its history, the country passed through several stages as a territory under Assyrian kings as a part of the Babylonian empire, and as a colony of Syria, Oman and Portugal, till late in the 18th century when a Khalifa family of Bahrain itself captured the controlling forces. From 1830 till 1968, Bahrain remained a British Protectorate when the British government decided to enter into treaty relations with all Persian Sheikdoms. After declaring complete independence in 1971, Bahrain promulgated a Constitution in 1973 and elected its first Parliament. But the Khalifa reasserted his powers of ruling the country in 1975 and the monarchy still continues. Bahrain is on the road to democratization of course under monarchy. After the earlier ruler passed away in 1999, his son took over, who granted citizenship rights to all sections of the population allowing voting rights to women and conducting general elections. Bahrain has at present a liberal constitutional monarchy.

Population

Bahrain had a population of about 1.2 million of which more than 50 percent are expatriate. Persons of Indian origin working in Bahrain come to more than 4 lakh as on 2011 most of them from the states of South India. The Indian presence in Bahrain began with the recruitment of Indian workers to the Bahrain Petroleum Company in the 1930s. The Indian community is engaged now-a-days in different capacities –as workers in construction, maintenance and service sectors, as tradesmen in provisions, jewellery and electronic

goods both in wholesale and retail business, and as domestic workers, most of whom work as housemaids. Housemaids reportedly face problems of maltreatment.

There exists a predominance of men among the expatriate population. More than three-fourths of them are male. And about four fifths of the expatriates are above 14 years of age. The native population has also more males than females, but is more balanced than the expatriate population. There are 503 males and 497 females per 1000 population. Nearly 30 percent of the native population comprises children below 14 years of age.

The native population is predominantly Muslim, accounting for about 98 percent. Eighty five percent of them live in the capital city of Manama, which is a commercial and cultural centre. The adult population has attained near universal literacy.

Languages

The major language in use is Arabic even though English is also in general use.

Resources

The country has oil, natural gas, fish and pearls among the important natural resources. The economy has a highly developed tertiary sector accounting for about 53 percent, a developed industrial sector which accounts for about 46 percent and an extremely small agricultural sector which contributes only about one percent of the GDP.

Culture

Bahrain is home to several communities and cultures. Indians have established several schools and socio-cultural organizations under the overall guidance of the coordination committee of Indian associations.(CCIA). Bahrain has allowed non-Muslims to build churches, temples and *gurudwaras* in the country, even though Islam is the religion of the native population.

Government

The country is governed by a constitutional hereditary monarchy. The chief executive is the king himself and the Prime minister and a council of ministers are appointed by the king. There is a bi-cameral parliament. Consisting of a house of deputies of 40 elected members and a council of 40 members appointed by the king for a term of 4 years. Though political parties are not allowed, some political societies have been sanctioned since 2001.

Economy

Bahrain is a rich country with per capita income at about \$20,500 (in 2005). The monetary unit is the Bahrain Dinar. One Dinar is equal to 1000 fils and Indian Rs. 117. Money is easily convertible into and from Dinar and money can be brought in or sent out without restrictions.

The major industries in Bahrain are petroleum processing and refining. aluminium smelting, iron pelletisation, fertilizers, offshore banking, ship-repairing and tourism.

Bahrain is a major financial and business centre, the leading Islamic financial centre in the world. Bahrain spends large sums on urban development, education, health care and other social services. Housing and infrastructural facilities are also rapidly on the increase.

Transportation

The main means of internal transportation is roadways. Banks and other financial institutions are well developed. Fridays are national holidays in Bahrain. The usual working

hours are from 7.00 hours to 14.00 hours and shops operate between 8.00 hours and 12.30 hours and between 15.30 hours and 18.30 hours. except on holidays and Thursdays when they work from 15.30 hours to 21.00 hours.

Bahrain is the home base of Gulf Air. The international airport of Bahrain is situated in Maharaq, the second largest island of Bahrain. Bahrain links with more than 300 regional flights a week.

Costs of transportation by bus are easy and cheap. Bus fare is a flat 200-fils per trip among most towns. Buses ply from about 6 in the morning to 9.30 in the evening. Cars are available on rent at the rate of BD 12 per day without driver and BD 45 per day with driver. Foreign driving license is not accepted for driving in Bahrain. An international driving license obtained prior to landing in Bahrain is required.

Seat belts are to be used by persons driving cars or are seated on the front seat of cars.. Taxis are readily available too. Information on Taxi Fares and Tourist Information Guide are available free at tourist offices. Taxi fares are higher during midnight to early dawn and for trips from airports. It is advisable to fix the taxi fare in advance unless the taxi has a meter in use.

Holidays.

Bahrain has changed recently their weekend to Fridays and Saturdays in order to have a day of the weekend shared with the rest of the world. The change came to effect from September1, 2006

Communication.

Post offices are spread throughout the island. Most of the mail is delivered to private boxes available at the main post offices. Home deliveries are also made if correct address (consisting of building number road number and block number of the addressee) is given in the envelope. Telecommunication and telephone systems are fully developed in Bahrain.

Medical facilities

Medical facilities are well developed in Bahrain. State medical facilities are by and large free. Emergency treatment is available at a nominal cost of Bahrain Dinar 3 in the main general hospital at Salmania.

Food

Bahrain's food comprises dishes of fish, meat, eggs, rice, dates, bread and coffee. Consumption of alcohol is prohibited except for those who have drinking licence.

Dress

Bahrain prescribes no formal dress code. Visitors are advised however to dress sensibly and modestly. Shorts are normally not acceptable both for men and women, and women should not wear short, low-cut, backless or sleeveless dresses which may appear offensive to some citizens.

Crime and Punishment.

Crime rates are low in Bahrain, except rare occurrence of theft, robbery and burglary. Indian expatriates are cautioned to keep vigil and inform the police and the local Indian Embassy in case of any infringement on their security.

Bahrain has stringent rules for punishment for offences and violation of rule. Litigations take time to get resolved. Indebtedness, labour disputes, possession and use of illegal drugs and alcoholic drinks, paedophilia, pornography are all subjects on which litigation may continue for long periods of time and invite harsh punishment.

Unionization

Trade union activities have been allowed in Bahrain since 2002, even in government departments.

Bahrain provides its people (not the expatriates) with free medical care, education and old age pensions.

Although school attendance is not compulsory, primary and secondary enrolment ratios are high and literacy rates are the highest in the region. Higher education facilities are available at the Bahrain University and the Arabian Gulf University and specialized institutes such as the College of Health Services.

Life in Bahrain

Bahrainis are a generous, open and gregarious people and warmly welcoming. Life in Bahrain is cosmopolitan, safe and relaxed. The price of accommodation ranges from US \$ 500 to US\$ 1500 per month. Bahrain has become a centre of entertainments in the Gulf region in which concerts, sports and cultural events abound. A majority of Bahrainis speak English.

Social Customs

Arab customs are, generally, very different from those in the west, and you should be aware of what you're expected to do and not to do. Acquaintance with local customs and social behaviour will make your adaptation easier. And being a foreigner, this adaptation is inevitable for you. Apart from criminal actions and behaviour, there are certain unwritten rules that you must observe in order to avoid offending local sensibilities.

Dress

There are different ways of dressing for local and expatriate women. Outside the home, Arab women dress according to religious custom ie they must cover most of the body, from head to foot. The traditional black overgarment (*abaya*) is ankle length with long sleeves and a high neckline, and the hair is covered. Some Arab women (especially Saudis and those with strictly religious husbands) are totally covered, including their face and hands. This is to protect women from unwanted attention. Foreign women can wear western clothes but should always dress conservatively.

Arabs proscribe clothes for women which reveal the shoulders, arms and legs. Any woman dressing provocatively will be regarded as being of 'easy virtue' or perhaps even as a prostitute. In the home, Arab women often adopt western dress, particularly younger women, and there are no restrictions on dressing for foreign women in private.

Arab men wear the thobe (a loose, ankle-length robe). It can be worn for all occasions, including social and business. The traditional head covering is the *guthra* (a white or red and white checkered cloth) held in place by the *agal* (a black 'rope'). Arab men wear casual dress on very informal occasions or at the beach

Foreign men are not expected to wear Arab garments. Men should avoid wearing shorts and sleeveless shirts in public. However, suits are rarely worn in the Gulf, except for

important business meetings and related social events. Standard dress in the office is a shirt (usually long-sleeved), tie and lightweight trousers.

Forms of Address

It is important to greet local people in the correct way. It is important to address a person by his full name, particularly on formal occasions and in correspondence. The general formal address is Sayyed (sir) for men and Sayeeda or Sayeedity (Madam) for women, followed by the person's full name. Rulers are addressed "Your Highness (Your Majesty). Senior members of the ruling families are called your Excellency followed by Shaik and their full name.

Greetings

The most common greeting in the Gulf is *Salam alaykum* ('Peace be upon you'), and the correct reply to which is *Wa alaykum as-salam* ('And upon you be peace'). Other common greetings and the accepted replies are:

Greeting	Meaning	Reply
Ahlan wa sahan	Hello	Ahlan bik
Sabah al-khayr	Good morning/afternoon	Sabah an-nur
Masa al-khayr	Good evening	Masa an-nur

Note that *tisbah ala-khayr*, meaning 'good night', is said on parting, as in English, and the reply is *wa inta min ahlu*.

You should always shake hands when greeting and parting from Arab men. In the case of Arab women, you should be guided by the woman's behaviour: many Arab women won't shake hands with non-Arab men, although educated women might. This is normal even with close friends whom you meet frequently.

If the handshake you receive when leaving somebody is longer than the one you received when meeting him, it indicates that you've made a good impression.

Incidentally, newcomers should note that refusals or protracted reluctance to meet people are frowned upon.

Note also that you shouldn't approach Arab women, look at them or talk to them unless you've been properly introduced.

After handshaking, it's customary to enquire after the other person's health and other matters, and you should expect similar enquiries to be directed at you.

(Don't enquire after the health of the female members of an Arab's family, however, but restrict your questions to those regarding the family in general or the sons.) This can take a long time, as neither party wishes to be the one to draw matters to a close.

Foreigners aren't expected to know or use all the subtleties this ritual involves, but you will make a good impression if you learn at least some of the standard expressions and use them in the correct way.

Whether in face-to-face conversation or speaking to people on the telephone, don't talk business straight away; if you do so, Arabs will assume that you're impatient or not interested in them personally.

Hands & Feet

You should accept refreshment whenever it's offered, but note that you should always use your right hand for drinking and eating, as the left hand is regarded as unclean (as it's used for 'toilet purposes'). Similarly, you should avoid showing the soles of your shoes or feet, which implies that you think the other person is 'dirt', which is obviously highly offensive. You should therefore keep your feet flat on the ground and not cross your legs.

Invitations

If you're invited to the home of an Arab, you should always accept.

You should generally take every opportunity to become acquainted with local people and avoid the natural tendency to stay within the social and physical confines of your foreign 'ghetto'.

Your Arab host will be interested in you and your views. However, you should avoid politics and religion as subjects for discussion; your opinions might be regarded as ill-informed or even offensive, even if they seem acceptable to you from a western perspective.

When you enter the *majlis*, the reception room for visitors, you should always remove your footwear, unless the host indicates otherwise.

If you're with a female companion, she will be whisked off to join the women.

You will almost certainly be offered something to drink and perhaps eat; accept the offer.

Arabs are almost always polite and expect the same from those they meet, and believe that sharing a meal with a person positively affects the relationship.

It's certainly worth learning enough Arabic to communicate the pleasantries, greetings and responses of the country you're living in.

You will enjoy people's reaction and your hosts invariably offer encouragement to those who attempt to speak their language. It's important to note, however, that the Arabic language has a special significance, having been designed to carry the word of God, so it's important to use it respectfully.

You should also never call at an Arab's house without warning him that you're coming. If the women of the family are present, this won't be appreciated.

You should also avoid expressing admiration for any of your host's possessions, as tradition dictates that he must then offer it to you. Although this tradition isn't followed by everybody, it can nevertheless cause embarrassment. What's more, the correct response is for the recipient to give an even more valued gift in return, so think twice before admiring an Arab's Rolls Royce!

Don't Dos

You should also heed the following warnings:

- Don't offer alcoholic drinks to an Arab, unless you're certain that he drinks alcohol. This can cause great offence.
- Don't walk on a prayer mat or in front of any person at prayer and try not to stare at people who are praying.

- Don't try to enter a mosque without first asking permission. It's unlikely that you will be allowed in.
- Don't try to enter the Holy sites or mosques. The roads are well signposted to notify everybody of this restriction. If a non-Muslim is found within the prohibited areas, he's likely to be assaulted and will be afforded no protection against the assailants.
- Avoid blasphemy, particularly in the presence of Muslims.
- Avoid putting an Arab in a position where he might suffer a 'loss of face' in front of other Arabs. He will appreciate this, if he notices your action.
- Don't beckon to people with a finger, as this is considered particularly impolite. Arabs might use such a gesture to summon a dog.
- Avoid shouting and displays of aggression or drunkenness at all times, as such behaviour is rarely tolerated.
- During Ramadan, don't eat, drink or smoke anywhere where you can be seen by Muslims during the hours of daylight and don't engage in any noisy behaviour or embrace or kiss anyone in public.

Living and working conditions in Bahrain (As on 2011)

The Kingdom of Bahrain is home to nearly 4 Lakh Indians, out of a total population of approximately 1.2 million. Indians are visible in all walks of life: bankers, businessmen, IT specialists, doctors, nurses, journalists, management consultants, hotel managers, labourers, housemaids, etc.

The economy of Bahrain is on an upswing. And this growth is expected to be maintained over a period of time. To sustain this growth, there will be a need for substantial amount of manpower in the coming years. According to a recent HSBC Report also, the majority of new jobs would continue to go to expatriates and therefore it is expected that more and more Indian workers would be coming to Bahrain.

The employment conditions in Bahrain.

System of Sponsorship

The present system of entry into Bahrain for employment as also for tourism, social visit or business is by means of sponsorship. The sponsor can be an individual, a business house, an organization or even a diplomatic Mission. In the case of those coming to Bahrain on employment visas, the sponsor is responsible for arranging their residence permit, insurance, etc.

Employment Visas

On the basis of criteria fixed by the Ministry of Labour, Government of Bahrain, the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) issues work / employment visas to sponsor to recruit a certain number of expatriates. The sponsor recruits the expatriates, as per the Work Permit granted by the Ministry of Labour, and brings them to Bahrain. The residence permit for the employees has to be obtained within a period of thirty days from the date of arrival. Any violation of this clause attracts a fine of BD 15 per year. As per the local labour laws, the sponsor and the employee must enter into a work contract. Employment under Visit Visa is not permitted.

Common complaints

The system of sponsorship gives considerable advantage to the employer over the employee and consequently leads to exploitation. The different types of complaints received from Indian nationals are indicated below:

- Retention of passports of the employees by the sponsor in order to exploit them by denying permission to travel even in emergency. According to the Bahraini as well as Indian laws, the passports should be either with the holder or with a person authorized by the holder to keep his/her passport.
- Delay in payment or denial of payment of salaries and wages by the sponsor, knowing fully well that the employees have no means to seek quick redress or to find another job or to get back their financial dues. The directives of the Ministry of Labour effective 1st July, 2006, directing the companies having ten or more employees, to disburse the salaries only through banks have not been fully complied with by the employers. In an instance, it was reported that three months' salary of Indian doctors in one the reputed private hospitals of Bahrain was being withheld. It has been found in many cases that up to three months salary of the employees is held back by the employers.
- Unauthorised deductions from salary on account of water, electricity, accommodation, food and transport.
- Congested, unhygienic and unsafe accommodation in labour camps lacking in certain cases even basic facilities for cooking and washing. In one of the worst fire tragedies in Bahrain, 16 Indian nationals lost their lives in July 2006. So far, the company has not paid any amount ex-gratia or compensation.
- Unsafe working conditions and denial of safety equipment. Neglect of safety precautions was a major factor in Al Dana Boat disaster in March 2006 culminating in loss of 58 lives including 22 Indians.
- Unsafe mode of transportation to and fro place of work.
- Inability to leave Bahrain without 'no objection' certificate from the sponsor. As per the local laws, it is the responsibility of the sponsor to ensure that the residence papers of the employees are in order but it is the employee who gets arrested and not the employer if the employee's papers are not in order.
- Bahrain allows change of sponsorship after initial contract period provided LMRA-prescribed mobility procedures are followed.
- Forcing the employees to sign blank papers for misuse and exploitation.
- The sponsor does not provide employment nor regularizes the workers' stay, thereby rendering the latter's continued stay illegal leading to detention of the employees.
- The employees are sometimes falsely implicated and reported to police by the sponsors for offences such as theft resulting in their imprisonment and deportation.
- There have been instances where the sponsors have gone to treating their employees as their 'property' and inflicting atrocities in clear violation of human rights. An Indian national was kept chained to a wall in a shop in one of the local shopping centres. According to the sponsor, this was done to prevent the Indian national from leaving the sponsor and finding work outside.

Housemaids

The housemaids are not covered by Bahraini Labour Laws and are mostly made to work long hours without break or weekly offs, There have also been instances where the housemaids have been victims of willful injury and even physical assault.

- Some of the female employees working in the beauty parlours also complain of exploitation. Even though the female employees are employed as Ladies Hairdresser/Beautician etc., they are also compelled to clean the toilets, mopping, sweeping, window cleaning etc. attached to the beauty saloons.

Residence Permit

As an off-shoot of the sponsorship, the grant of residence permits is also abused in many cases. The sponsor, instead of canceling the residence permit of the employee at the time of termination of the work contract, renews the residence permit for a further period of two years. Thus the employee is forced to work with the same sponsor. The residence permit can be changed only when the sponsor gives 'no objection' to the employee. For this, the sponsor sometimes demands a large sum of money.

Work Contracts: Articles 38 and 39 of the Labour Law for the Private Sector issued by the Ministry of Labour of Bahrain, lay down the conditions of employment to be mutually agreed upon by the employer and the worker. However, in actual practice, the worker is often presented with a contract which is violative of the workers' rights and loaded heavily in favour of the employer. Many of the contracts do not have any clause regarding hours of work, resignation and serving notice by the employees, should they wish to quit.

Although there is no such category as Free Visa, this term classifies instances where local agents/businessmen/shell companies manage to obtain visas for workers which are then sold in India for as much as BD. 1200/-. These workers come to Bahrain and are 'free' to find work and fend for themselves. Periodically, they are required to pay the sponsor/agent a certain percentage of their earnings for renewing their visas. Quite often, the sponsors do not renew their visas rendering the status of these workers illegal. These so-called 'free visa' workers are easiest to exploit, as the employers do not have to meet any obligations such as airfare, leave, medical treatment, insurance etc for the workers. During Jan – June 2006, Ministry of Labour of Bahrain prosecuted 160 companies for illegal visa trade and 759 expatriate workers including Indians were arrested and deported.

Visit Visas: The Department of Immigration of Govt of Bahrain issues 'visit visas' for a short duration, i.e. for a period of one month, extendable up to maximum of three months, with the clear stipulation that no employment should be taken in Bahrain. However, such visas are sold for large sums, the proceeds of which are shared by the sponsors in Bahrain and agents in other countries. The expatriate worker is promised legal entry, work permit, residence visa and a regular job on arrival in Bahrain by his agent. These workers come to Bahrain and unable to have their visas regularized, find themselves at the mercy of the sponsor/agent in Bahrain and have to pay to him a certain percentage of their earnings. In most cases, the sponsors do not renew/regularize their visas rendering the status of these workers 'illegal'. Such category of illegal expatriate workers are exploited wherever they are able to find work.

The onus and responsibility of payment of fines for illegal stay rests with the Bahraini sponsor/agent and not on 'free' or 'visit' visa holders but in case workers are arrested by the authorities, fines are extracted from workers themselves and not from the sponsor. The workers due to inability to pay huge fines, even though willing to return to India, get caught in a vicious cycle and thus are forced to continue working illegally in Bahrain.

Some of the recruitment agencies in India also connive with local companies/sponsors by making false promises and alluring innocent people to Bahrain for jobs with salaries far below the contracted levels. Many of these victims incur heavy debts in India to pay the recruitment agencies for visa. There are many cases where even the relatives, friends and persons known to the gullible job aspirants lure them to Bahrain promising lucrative salaries and vanish after charging hefty sums from them. Consequently there have been several cases of hapless workers committing suicide after finding themselves thus trapped.

Living Conditions:

Wages : The wage level for expatriate workers has remained depressed over the years despite increase in cost of living. A table of wages usually paid to expatriate workers in Bahrain is annexed. Whereas Government of Bahrain has fixed minimum wage for Bahraini nationals at BD. 200/- per month recently, there is no minimum wage law as yet for expatriate workers.

Accommodation

The minimum rent for a single bedroom semi-furnished apartment in a medium class area in Bahrain is BD. 200/- per month and BD. 250/- for two bed-room.

Transport

The public transport is not available all the times and does not connect various parts of the city. Taxis are expensive – minimum fare during daytime is BD.1/-. It is advisable to settle for the fare before boarding the taxi to avoid any dispute later.

Medical

There are Government run Health Centres and hospitals where expatriate workers having valid residence permit can avail free treatment including medicines, diagnostic tests and hospitalization. However, for consultation with specialists as private patients, a sum of BD. 20 is charged. Consultation at other private hospitals and practitioners also costs minimum BD. 20 per visit. Medicines and diagnostic tests are also much costlier compared to that in India.

Education

Satisfactory facilities for education (CBSE syllabus) up to senior secondary (XIIth) level are available at five Indian schools; one school is up to secondary (X th) level, and one up to VI th standard. Average monthly cost of educating a child is BD.40/-.

Connectivity to India

Air India, Air India Express, Gulf Air, Oman Air, Bahrain Air fly to Delhi, Mumbai, Kochi, Kozhikode, Mangalore, Thiruvananthapuram and Chennai. Return economy air fare is approximately BD.200/-. However, during summer the demand is very high, seats are difficult to get and air fares go up.

Dispute settlement mechanisms

For those who come under the purview of the Bahrain Labour Laws, any case of dispute is first looked into by the Ministry of Labour. As per the Labour Law, notices are issued to both the sponsor and the employee. In case, either the sponsor or the employee does not turn up in response to the notice, fresh notices are issued. If after issue of three notices at a gap of one week each, the matter is not settled, Ministry of Labour transfers the matter to Labour Court for settlement. The settlement of disputes between the workers and the

employers is a tardy and time-consuming process as the sponsors do turn up most often. During the pendency of the case, the workers are not permitted to work outside. Out of sheer frustration, many a time the worker foregoes his claim and seeks repatriation. However, the worker can authorize lawyers in Bahrain to continue the case in Court on his behalf. For those not under the purview of Labour Laws, such as housemaids etc., Ministry of Interior is the agency to be approached for settlement of disputes.

Embassy

The Embassy takes up the cases of complaints by the workers first with the sponsor and if no satisfactory solution is found, advises the workers to file a case with the Ministry of Labour and then the case is pursued by the Embassy with the concerned authorities. Visits to workers camps, detention centres and jails are periodically arranged for welfare purposes by the Embassy. The destitute housemaids are sent to a shelter run by the Migrant Workers Protection Society till their case is settled. The errant companies, their owners, managers and other individual sponsors are blacklisted to bar them from further recruitment of Indians and visiting India, in case they fail to resolve the problems of the Indian employees. However, where the defaulting employers take remedial steps, they are de-listed.

Caution

- i) The Embassy extends assistance to Indian nationals only in cases where no violation of local laws, civil or criminal, on their part is involved. The Embassy can also take action such as blacklisting, impounding/revoking of passports and/or instituting proceedings against Indian nationals found indulging in exploiting fellow Indians or jeopardizing their interest in any way.
- ii) The Indian nationals before proceeding to Bahrain for any job are advised to ascertain through the Embassy or from any reliable source about the standing of the company/employer, terms and conditions of the contract including salary, accommodation, transport, medical facilities, overtime, leave, airfares, insurance and indemnity. Under no circumstances, they should sign any blank papers/contracts or accept any open-ended job offer or verbal assurance from any manpower agencies or 'contacts'.

Agreement of Employment

Required Documents

- (1) Application for Agreement
- (2) Agreement of Employment (2 copies)
- (3) N.O.C. (No Objection Certificate)
- (4) Work Permit (from Labour Ministry) (Minimum age requirement for Housemaids to be recruited from India is 30 years)
- (5) CPR card of the sponsor
- (6) Commercial Registration (in case of companies)
- (7) Sponsor's Salary Slip (in case of individual sponsor – minimum salary should be BD 250 per month)

OR

Bank Statement in case of companies with BD1000 as minimum bank balance

Application to be routed through registered manpower recruiting agency.

Minimum Wages recommended for different Categories of workers in Bahrain	
Sl No	Category Minimum wages per Month (BD)
1.	Accountants 200
2.	Accounts Assistant/Office Assistant/ Computer Programmer/ Secretaries/Stenographers 180
3.	Artists 120
4.	Baby-Sitters 120
5.	Butchers 100
6.	Captains (Ships) 300
7.	Chemists/Pharmacists 150
8.	Cleaners 90
9.	Clerks/Accounts Clerks/Cashiers/ Typists /Store Keepers 120
10.	Commercial Advs. Designers 120 to 150
11.	Cooks (for House) 100
12.	Cooks (for Restaurant) 90
13.	Denters 100
14.	Drivers (Cars/Buses/Trucks) 100
15.	Engineer (Junior Grade) /Foreman / Supervisers (holding Certificates/Diplomas) 250
16.	Fishermen 75
17.	Gardeners/Farm Workers 65
18.	Goldsmiths 90 to 120
19.	Hair Cutters / Hair Dressers 90
20.	Heavy Duty Drivers (Cranes/ Bulldozers/Dumpers) 140
21.	Heavy Duty Operators 120
22.	Helpers to Technicians & Skilled Traders 75
23.	Housemaids/House Boys/Nannies etc. (Food & Accomodation also to be provided in addition to the recommended wages 100
24.	Interior Decorators 120
25.	Laminators 90
26.	Leather Workers / Seat Makers 90
27.	Light Duty Operators 120
28.	Lubricators 100
29.	Managers/Directors 300
30.	Masons/Carpenters/Steel Fitters/ Steel Assemblers/ Riggers/Metal & Steel Workers/Tile Fixers 90
31.	Nurses 150
32.	Office Boys/Office Cleaners 75
33.	Opticians 150
34.	Painters 90
35.	Pharmacists 130
36.	Photographers (Cameramen) 120

37.	Plumbers/Fabricators/Furniture Carpenters/Fancy Wood Workers/ Pipe Fitters	100
38.	Receptionists	180
39.	Sales Representatives	200
40.	Sandwich Makers/Bakers	90
41.	Shop Assistants/Salesmen	90
42.	Store Keepers	120
43.	Tailors/Garment Workers	90
44.	Teachers (Junior Grade)	150
45.	Unskilled Labourers/Helpers	60
46.	Waiters (Restaurants/Hotels)	75
47.	Washermen (Laundry)	90
48.	Watchmen/Security Guards	90
49.	Welders/Electricians/Mechanics/Fitters/ Motor Technicians/AC Mechanics/ Light Mechanic/ Technicians of various categories and Experienced Grades without diploma	100
50.	Wiremen	100

Indian Community

General

Bahrain with a total population of 1.2 million and an area of about approximately 700 sq. kms, is the smallest of the GCC States. However, the proximity of Bahrain to other GCC countries and its location midway in the Gulf gives it a strategic importance. Bahrain's very early exposure to foreigners, introduction to education in the 1920s and co-existence with Christianity (St. Mary's Church in Bahrain was established in 1938), conditioned the Bahrainis in general, to an open and favourable attitude towards expatriates. The trade and commercial activity generated by the discovery of oil in 1932, especially the oil boom years of the early 70s, and later faced with declining oil reserves, Bahrain turned to petroleum processing and refining and transformed itself into an international finance centre. The growing economy led to the increased need to accommodate and make room for a large expatriate community. Today, the expatriates form nearly 50% of the total population.

Demographic Features and the Indian Work-Force

Of the nearly 600,000 expatriates, nearly 400,000 Indian nationals form the largest expatriate community in Bahrain along with Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans, Filipino, Indonesians and Arabs of different nationalities. The Indian workforce is by far the largest of the expatriate workforce. Keralites constitute approx. 65% of the Indian community. The other major groups are from Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa and Punjab. Today 65-70% of the Indian expatriate workforce is employed in the construction, contracting & maintenance sectors. There is also a relatively small number of Indian housemaids estimated at around 10000-15000. They come mostly from states such as Kerala, Goa and Andhra Pradesh. The retail and other business activities include provisions, hardwares, jewellery, electronics, etc. Some others have taken up jobs as storekeepers, chemists, carpenters, barbers, etc. In addition to our predominant blue-collar labour force, there is a sizable number of doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, bankers, managers and other professionals who play a vital role in Bahrain's socio-economic development. Professionals, such as doctors, engineers, accountants, etc. have also found growing opportunities in Bahrain.

Today there is hardly any established Bahraini business organisation that does not have a senior or middle level Indian employee playing an important role in its operations. The top Bahraini business houses such as Zayani, Al Moayyad, Fakhro, Kanoo, Koohejis, Ahmed Mansour Al Ali, Abdullah Nass, Mohammed Jalal as well as companies like Bahrain Aluminium, BAPCO, GPIC, banks and finance companies etc. have Indians in their senior or middle management cadres.

Labour Relations

Indian labour enjoys a good reputation in terms of their conduct, loyalty, higher productivity and non-involvement in local affairs. There is a preference amongst Bahrainis to employ Indians over others.

With the largest expatriate community in this country, there are always ongoing labour and consular problems, which are constantly attended to by the Mission. These mainly revolve around a variety of problems with local sponsors, premature cancellation of contracts, illegal stay, change of contractual obligations etc. A generally recurring problem relates to those who abandon their sponsors and work illegally or are staying illegally due to various compulsions and circumstances. These problems become difficult to solve, especially at times of accidents, desire to return home prematurely, reduction of fines, etc.

Role of the Embassy

The Embassy has taken number of ameliorative measures to address these issues. These are enumerated below:

The Embassy has established nodal points for regular interaction with the Ministries of Labour, Justice, Interior, Public Prosecutor, Immigration, Local Police etc. Such interaction has proved to be extremely useful.

The Embassy organizes Open Houses on the last Friday of every month. Such Open Houses provide an opportunity to the members of the Indian community to meet the Ambassador and senior officials of the Embassy on a holiday and take up non-routine consular and labour issues. These issues are then taken up with the nodal points of the Government of Bahrain for appropriate follow up action.

Errant companies, manpower companies are black-listed and prevented from recruiting manpower from India. The owners of these companies are also denied visas to visit India. This measure has been effective and some of the leading companies have started cooperating with the Mission in according due rights to the workers.

Mission has made it mandatory that the recruitment of all housemaids in Bahrain would be through the Embassy after execution of bank guarantee for US\$ 2500/- in respect of each housemaid to be employed in Bahrain and after attestation of individual work contract by the Embassy.

The Embassy has constituted two Committees – Indian Community Relief Fund (ICRF) and Indian Community Services (ICS) - consisting of Indian community members to assist the Embassy in the respective areas. Both these bodies are very active and respond quickly to calls for help from the community. Visits to workers camps, detention centres and jails are periodically arranged for welfare purposes by the Embassy. The Mission receives

considerable help from the local Indian community and voluntary organizations and is in close coordination with the Indian Community Relief Fund (ICRF)

A 24-hour help line has been set up in the Mission. The telephone number (17713509) has been widely circulated among the members of the Indian community to enable them to seek assistance round the clock.

With the concurrence of the Ministry of Interior, Government of Bahrain, Local Help Committees have been set up in 16 regions which would cover the entire Kingdom of Bahrain. Members of this Committee have been issued identity cards and their names have been circulated to local Police Stations. These identity cards gives them the requisite authorization to approach the concerned authorities in case of need.

Indian Cultural and Religious Bodies

The Indian community has 29 registered and 51 unregistered socio-cultural organisations and clubs. There are seven schools with facility to study under CBSE system. There are a number of Hindu religious centres including a 60-year-old Hindu temple, 5 churches and 6 Gurudwaras. The Indian Club was set up in 1915 and the Bahrain Keraleeya Samajam was set up in 1947. Most of the associations have been brought under the umbrella of the Co-ordination Committee of Indian Associations (CCIA) with a view to centralising efforts on key occasions such as Independence/Republic Day etc.

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