



NON STOP FUN: STUDENTS OF THE PRESIDENCY COLLEGE IN CHENNAI TAKE OUT A 'BUS DAY' PARADE FOR THE SECOND CONSECUTIVE DAY.



TRUCE: THE FEDERATION OF CHENNAI MINORITY COLLEGE TEACHERS AND MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION HAS WITHDRAWN ONE-DAY HUNGER FAST.



WHAT'S IN A NAME? MEMBERS OF THE HINDU MUNNANI KATCHI STAGED A PROTEST AGAINST RENAMING OF GREENWAY'S ROAD AFTER LATE EVANGELIST D.G.S. DINAKARAN. THE STATE GOVERNMENT RECENTLY ACCEPTED A PROPOSAL TO NAME THE STRETCH FROM THE ANDHRA MAHILA SABHA JUNCTION TO MRC NAGAR AFTER THE PREACHER.

CITY

● TAMIL NADU AND KERALA WILL BE AFFECTED BY REVERSE MIGRATION FOLLOWING JOB LOSSES OWING TO GLOBAL SLOWDOWN

NO GOLD, BUT GLOOM FROM GULF

BY ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI

March 4: The dream seems to be over with the Gulf losing its glitter and allure as a land where money and more money can be made.

With the global economic recession kicking in, nearly five lakh skilled and unskilled Indian workers are packing up and leaving the Gulf region.

Tamil Nadu and Kerala which send the most number of workers to the Gulf are likely to be the worst affected by the reverse migration because these workers have been remitting billions of dollars back home over the years.

Figures with the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs showed that Indian workers abroad sent home \$30 billion in 2006-2007, making India the highest receiver of remittance from migrant workers. The remittance went up to US \$40 billion in 2007-08.

Analysts say the 'remittance' economy would be affected by this reverse migration. What about the workers who return and what about their livelihood? Recently Pravasi

Bharathiya Welfare Trust, a UAE based organization, appealed to the Indian prime minister to ensure an immediate assistance of Rs 1 lakh the workers who had to return after losing their jobs in the Gulf.

Mr Murugan, a Gulf returnee from Kalpakkam says, "More than 4,000 employees lost their jobs and returned home last month. According to company officials, they are not able to pay the salary and continue the projects; so they have forced us to resign."

Mr Murugan, who worked as a carpenter in Dubai, for more than two and half years, is searching for a job here.

"The government has not taken any measures to protect thousands of NRI professionals and labourers who have returned from various countries," says Yamini Athmavilas, a researcher on Indian migrant workers.

The Kerala government declared a Rs 100 crore package to secure the lives of the returnees; but the Centre and the Tamil Nadu government are yet to come out with a package for these workers.



Centre yet to address demands of migrants

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

March 4: The long-standing demand of migrant workers for coordination among the Home Ministry, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs and Ministry of External Affairs is yet to materialise.

Too many players in India handle migration, experts allege pointing out that the process is handled by the ministry of external affairs, home ministry and ministry of overseas Indian affairs.

"These ministries work in isolation and there is no coordination among them," said Bernard D' Samy, director of Arunodaya Migrant Initiatives.

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overflow Lack of coordination between the concerned ministries has left the migrants in lurch which is creating lot of problems for them.

"When the government is encouraging migration for a better remittance economy, it is not maintaining the protection mechanism for the Indian labourers in the destination country. When most of the knowledge labourers' money goes to foreign accounts, a large number of Indian migrant labourers are sending money back to the country, especially from the Asian region," added D' Samy.

Migrant returnees point out that India's bilateral agreements with the labour receiving countries always forget the international standards of labour contracts and problems of migrant labourers. It never ensures the weekly holidays, living standards and basic labour rights of Indian labourers.

Migrant experts say the state government should take the initiative to resolve the crisis of migrant returnees by providing them financial assistance to start small scale industries and enterprises.

In Tamil Nadu, migrant workers have been demanding a dedicated cell to assist them and address their problems.

Domestic despair

● Women domestic workers from Tamil Nadu face a range of concerns — fraudulent agencies, labour exploitation, and even sexual exploitation in the name of domestic service.

● They are made to work under conditions that violate labour laws at the location of their employment, recruitments made

for non-existing jobs and fictitious employers, passports, visas, and other travel and employment documents withheld by employers and poor or exploitative work agreements.

● Create a system of work permits that would allow immigrants to have legal ways to work, stay on and renew the permits when needed.



"It is the Election Commission's responsibility to ensure that Indians all over the world get a chance to vote in the elections. The migrant labourers too have the rights to vote"

Dr Bernard D' Swamy, Director of Arunodaya Migrant Initiative



"Only residents in a particular constituency are allowed to vote. There are no separate voting rules for expatriate Indians. We cannot set up polling booths abroad."

Naresh Gupta, Chief Electoral Officer, Tamil Nadu

Their voting rights hang in balance

BY KUMAR CHELLAPPAN
CHENNAI

March 4: The long-standing demand of migrant Indian workers for voting rights will not bear fruit in the near future, according to foreign affairs experts and diplomats.

"It is impossible in the present scenario to grant voting rights to expatriates and persons of Indian origin," T.P. Sreenivasan, former Indian Ambassador to United Nations told DC.

Mr Sreenivasan said West

Asia alone accounted for more than 2.5 million Malayalees. "Add to this people from other states. We cannot compare the voting system followed by other countries for their expatriates. They constitute a minuscule per cent of the total and it is easy to make voting arrangements for them," he said.

People in government service who were on deputation abroad were sent ballot papers well in advance. "But this may not work for those who are engaged by

private companies. If such people have to be accorded voting rights, some kind of general polls as to be organised with hundreds of polling booths and officials," said Mr Sreenivasan.

Naresh Gupta, chief electoral officer, Tamil Nadu, said only residents registered in a particular constituency were allowed to vote. "Indians who are registered voters in any constituency of the country can come home and cast votes. But we do not have facilities to set up polling booths

abroad," he said. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, since its inception in early 2000 has been hearing demands for voting rights for the expatriates.

"It is natural for us to make such demands. Politicians make a beeline to West Asian countries regularly in the guise of meeting people of their states and to mobilise funds to fight elections," said one Keralaite working in UAE. But expatriates from the US, the UK and France are luckier.

"Every election in the US or the UK is like a national festival. Citizens of these countries can cast their votes irrespective of the fact that they are away from their place of domicile," said K Bhaskar, a widely travelled Malayalee. He pointed out that with the kind of satellite communication and data exchange facilities available, it should be possible for the Election Commission to arrange polling stations abroad and allow NRIs to participate in elections.



Residents of all-Tamil tribal hamlet Jambuuruttu near Hogenakkal gherao forest ranger Natraj for dismantling solar lamps installed in their area
PHOTO: AA. ANGURAJ

reporter's diary

Caught in a tussle over solar lamps

BY VIDYSREE DHARMARAJ
COIMBATORE

March 4: What is considered good by one government department is taken away by another department citing legal provisions. And caught in between are some 600-odd Tamil families living in Jambuuruttu, a tribal hamlet in Karnataka close to Hogenakkal, which was at the centre of a water sharing dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

The hamlet was plunged

into darkness after the Karnataka forest department personnel reportedly removed the solar lights, erected there under the renewable energy scheme.

The forest personnel said the bright lights were posing serious disturbances to the wildlife in the area.

"Such glaring lights cannot be permitted in a restricted area, as per the provisions of the Wildlife Act," the foresters contended. But the Ministry of Renewable Energy must

have installed the solar lamps in the tribal hamlet because it must be easier to do that than bring in electricity.

Angry villagers gheraoed the forest personnel for removing the solar lamps and plunging their hamlet into darkness.

The tussle also has shades of linguistic rivalry. "The attitude is clearly biased", says Rangathal, a tribal woman pointing to the neighbouring hamlet inhabited by Kannada-speaking

tribes. "When they can get away with solar lights and cable optic fibres in their hamlet that also comes under the supposed restricted area, why should we be deprived of our needs?" she queried.

Inhabitants of the hamlet for over seven decades, the tribals who are largely agriculturists and fishermen have also been provided with ration cards and voter's ID card. "Should this be called a political gimmick; vote-bank politics

aimed just to woo people for votes? If ration cards and voter's ID card can be given in a restricted area, isn't it absurd to remove the installed solar lamps that have been saving human lives from the wild animals?" asked Govindaraj, her husband.

The hamlet is close to yet another controversial spot, Gopinattam, the village of slain forest brigand Veerappan and the people of Jambuuruttu have not had it easy for over 10 decades now.



TODAY'S QUESTION (TQ) is: What precautions must the exam centres take to reduce the incidents of copying inside the exam hall?

Send your answers to tques@deccanmail.com.

Two best answers will get Rs 250 each. You could also write to us on local issues at info@deccanmail.com

Responses to yesterday's question below:

Right food, sleep help

Sir, Parents of students taking exams (especially the 10th and 12th board exams) should take adequate precautions to keep their children in the pink of health. In these hot summer days, they should provide cool eatables such as watermelons, green-coconut water and green vegetables. Moreover, they should advise the children to sleep early and rise early to study for their exams. If they have a day off between exams, they can indulge in some recreation to regain their sense of balance. Parents must send the wards to the examinations with a positive frame of mind so that they can achieve their goals.

R. Ravikumar, Thiruverkadu.

Fluid diet necessary

Sir, With the mercury shooting up, urinary infection, dehydration, diarrhoea, constipation, chicken pox, measles and digestion-related problems crop up. Children should be made to drink copious water, tender coconut water, buttermilk, fresh juices and fruits like watermelon, orange and grapes. Even salads with lots of vegetables like cucumber and carrot should be part of their diet. Since they have to constantly study, they should be fed food which is easily digestible and keeps them mentally and physically agile. Foods which are not easily digestible make the children drowsy affecting the clarity of their thinking.

Aruna Jothi, Neyveli.

Congratulations R. Ravikumar and Aruna Jothi. You can collect your prize between 4-5 pm from our office at SP 3, Developed Plot, Guindy Industrial Estate, Chennai-32, by providing identification.

DECCAN CHRONICLE EXCLUSIVE

TODAY'S Will RBI's repo rate cut boost economy?

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS
Will ICC ever hold the World Cup in sub-continent again?
YES 100%

SMS your replies to 57007.
Type dcpoll Y for Yes, dcpoll N for No.
By email: Type Y for Yes, N for No. Vote till 7pm today