

Expatriate Indian population in Bahrain now 290,000

The number of expatriate Indians working and living in Bahrain has risen to a record 290,000, according to Indian Ambassador Balkrishna Shetty.

During the course of the embassy open house for Indian expatriates held Friday, Shetty said around 5,000 Indians have been arriving in Bahrain every month.

'A few years ago we had around 140,000 people,' the Gulf Daily News quoted him as saying.

'The increase has been substantial and is a reflection of the faith, capacity and discipline of Indian workers,' he added.

During the course of an amnesty offered by the Bahraini government to illegal foreign workers to either regularise their papers or leave the country, 8,000 Indians left the country while 22,000 others regularised their visas, the ambassador said.

The amnesty had ended this Jan 31.

With new labour laws having come into effect in Bahrain this month, a total of 52,444 Indians have registered with the country's Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA).

They registered their names in the course of a labour registration festival organised last month by LMRA, which will now be the sole authority on all labour-related issues in that Gulf nation.

Indians were followed by Bangladeshis (28,479), Pakistanis (9,024), Filipinos (4,573), Nepalese 3,055 and Sri Lankans (1,391). Workers from other countries numbered 8,295.

'The number of expatriates on our records is nearly 500,000,' reports quoted LMRA chief executive Ali Radhi as saying.

'These include about 77,000 housemaids, who have not yet registered.'

He added that the LMRA would hold a separate registration process for housemaids later in the year.

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