

Kerala nurses for Maldives hospitals

Nurses from Kerala will soon head for the Maldives to care for patients in hospitals there.

Around 250 nurses from Kerala are to leave for the Maldives courtesy the state-run Overseas Development and Employment Promotion Consultants (ODEPC).

'The first batch of 28 nurses would fly to the Maldives on Tuesday and the rest will follow later,' S. Srinivasan, chairman and managing director ODEPC, told IANS.

'The Maldives has also asked us to recruit 30 doctors and other medical professionals from here, and we are on the job,' said Srinivasan. This is the first time the Maldives approached the agency for recruiting medical professionals from the state.

ODEPC was set up in 1977 to recruit manpower from here to various Middle East countries. It made a record profit of Rs.5.5 million during the previous Congress-led United Democratic Front government last year.

Srinivasan said the agency would next month conduct recruitment for teachers to Oman.

According to ODEPC, the biggest impediment to its smooth sailing is that with recruitment becoming big business it is fully controlled by agents who make a killing by demanding hefty charges. ODEPC has been made to lie dormant by these agents.

While recruitment agents charge more than Rs.100,000 as charges from a nurse bound for the Middle East, ODEPC collects a very nominal fee.

ODEPC is also to get busy recruiting nurses for Kuwait.

'We expect the papers to come from the Kuwaiti government and after that we will start conducting interviews for nurses to Kuwait,' said Srinivasan.

Since the past decade, Maldivian nationals have been arriving in large numbers for medical treatment in hospitals in Thiruvananthapuram.

Maldives has also opened a consulate here to help its nationals.

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