

AHAMED MISSION

Thousands of people from India go to Gulf countries to work for their livelihood. They take the help of agents who promise them work as per their qualification but in reality after landing in foreign countries, the people come to know that they have been cheated by the agents. They don't have any option but to work where they are not legally authorized to work. Even, people who are professionals are compelled to work as labourers. Nearly 50,000 Indian nationals are facing such problems and in the past the Government has not taken effective measures to provide relief to the people who were cheated by the agents. It is really a commendable job on part of Union Minister of State for Foreign Affairs E Ahamad who took the initiative and met the representatives of Saudi Government. He informed that the Kingdom and India will chalk out a memorandum of understanding improving the wel-



fare of 2 million Indians in the Kingdom. He held talks with Deputy Minister of Labor Abdulwahid Al-Humaid and his Saudi counterpart Nizar Madani. "Such an agreement will resolve labour issues and look after the interests of both the employer and employee," Ahamed said. Describing his talks with Saudi officials as fruitful and constructive, Ahamed said that the talks covered bilateral issues, matters of mutual interest and regional developments. He also said the discussions with Al-Humaid

revealed that Saudi Arabia is interested in setting up large recruitment companies in the Kingdom with offices in India to streamline the recruitment process and to minimize grievances of Indian workers in the Kingdom. "Most labour problems occur due to misunderstandings between the employer and the employee. In some cases people recruited for white-collar jobs were sent to work as farm hands," he added. He announced that the Kingdom is planning to intro-

duce an insurance scheme for Indian workers to look after the interests of employers as well as employees. He lauded the Kingdom's amnesty scheme for overstayers that ended on March 22. "It has benefited several thousands of Indians who made use of this facility offered by the Saudi Government," he stressed. He also pointed out that the labour department would work out a scheme to repatriate runaway (huroob) cases provided they have no financial liabilities toward their employers or anyone else. There are around 40,000 such cases and most of them are labourers. Both the Government are ready to solve the issue amicably. After Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Saudi Arabia, Ahamed maintained good relations with it with a hope to increase the bilateral cooperation in the pursuit of strategic partnerships, especially in the political,

economic, security, defence and cultural fields. Indian Ambassador Talmiz Ahmad, who was present at the bilateral talks with Minister E Ahamad, said that the two parties evaluated the progress made after the Riyadh Declaration and discussed future programmes. The Indian workers in Saudi Arabia were very happy after the announcement made by E. Ahamad and they were overheard saying that it is the first time that he has taken such bold step in Gulf countries. "Now, they can hope for relief and contact their family back home. The Indian Embassy has found as many as 40,000 people who have to repatriate runaway (huroob) cases and the Embassy will provide all assistance to them," said a senior official. He further said that the humanitarian help provided by E Ahamad has made the workers emotional and they are praying to Almighty for sending such a kind-hearted person to help them.