

**PRE DEPARTURE INFORMATION MANUAL**

FOR WORKERS ON

TEMPORARY CONTRACTUAL EMPLOYMENT

TO

YEMEN

## COUNTRY BRIEF- YEMEN



### **I. Demographic Features of the Country:**

Republic of Yemen is located at SW Asia, at the southern edge of the Arabian Peninsula. The present nation of Yemen was formed in 1990, when the Yemen Arab Republic (the former Yemen or Southern Yemen) were unified. Yemen is bordered on the north by Saudi Arabia, on the east by Oman, on the south by the Gulf of Aden, and on the west by the Red Sea. Yemen is the most populous country on the Arabian Peninsula.

The great majority of the population is Arab (90%); some are Afro-Arab. Minorities include Indians, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Somalis and Europeans. Islam is the main religion, with Sunnis being the predominant sect constituting around 90% of the population. The Shiites are concentrated mainly in the northern and north-western parts of Yemen. Small numbers of Yemeni Christians and Jews also live in the country. Arabic is the nation's principle language. The tribal social structure is still prevalent in the country, although its importance diminishes along the coastal areas, due to more foreign contact.

North Yemen became independent of the Ottoman Empire in 1918. The British, who had set up a protectorate around the southern port of Aden in the 19<sup>th</sup> century,

withdrew in 1967 from what became South Yemen. Three years later, the southern government adopted a Marxist orientation. The massive exodus of hundreds of thousands of Yemenis from the south to the north contributed to two decades of hostility between the states. The two countries were formally unified as the Republic of Yemen in 1990. A Southern Secessionist movement (Hirak) was quickly subdued in 1994.

**Capital:** Sana'a

**Population:** 25 million (2011 EIU Forecasts)

**Age structure:** 0 - 14 years 46% (Male 5,602,590/Female 5,398,103)

15-64 years: 51.3% (Male 6,212,378/Female 6,009,401)

65 years and over: 2.5% (Male 288,501/Female 311,810)

**Ethnic groups:** predominantly Arab; but also Afro-Arab, South Asians, Europeans.

**Economy:**

Recently released data from the Central Bank of Yemen show that Yemen's current-account position strengthened considerably in 2010, with the deficit narrowing from US\$2.6bn in 2009 to US\$1.2bn by the end of last year. The improvement was driven by marked gains in the trade account, with the trade deficit shrinking from US\$2bn in 2009 to US\$982m in 2010, as export earnings surged by one-third. The rise in earnings came despite a decline in oil output (oil exports income constituted some 82% of total earnings, although it is possible that this included some gas export revenue as well), which fell from an average of 287,000 b/d in 2009 to 268,000 b/d in 2010; however, this was more than offset by an US\$18/barrel increase in oil prices. The jump in export earnings helped to offset the considerable leap in the cost of imports, which rose by 11% from US\$7.9bn to US\$8.7bn. The rebound in import values is a result of a variety of factors, including the low base of 2009 values (as global commodity prices fell during the economic slump) and population growth. (Source: EIU Country Report June 2011).

Despite the economic potential Yemen is the most impoverished country in the Middle East and the only Least Developed Country (LDC) in the Arab World. The country's 45% population lives on less than \$2 per day, a third face chronic hunger and child malnutrition rates are among the highest in the world, while unemployment hovers over 40%. Yemen's population is set to double in the next 20 to 30 years to an astonishing 50 million due to a high growth rate of around 3%. The

population is very young: more than two-thirds are under the age of 25 and half are under 15.

In the ten months of political turmoil that started in February 2011 as a fall out of the 'Jasmine Revolution' in Tunisia and Egypt, the country has faced economic losses to the tune of US\$ 10 billion and oil production has come to a halt since March 2011 putting additional pressure on the economy and giving rise to shortage of gasoline, cooking gas and exorbitant rise in prices of the essential commodities.

**Labour force:** 6.832 million (2010 estimate<sup>1</sup>)

**Labour force by occupation:** Most people are employed in agriculture and herding. Services, construction, industry and commerce account for less than one fourth of the labour force.

**Foreign Labour:** Yemen is traditionally not a favoured destination for foreign workers as it has its own large unemployed population<sup>2</sup> and the salary packages offered by it in different categories are not lucrative when compared to those of the other GCC countries. Nevertheless, foreign doctors, nurses, professors, engineers and technicians have been working in Yemen for decades. The total expatriate population in Yemen was estimated to be 26,000, of which the Indians form the biggest group (around 5000), followed by Egyptians, Indonesians, Pakistanis, Chinese and Filipinos. In view of the deteriorating security situation many expatriates have left the country.

## **II. Indian Diaspora**

### **1. Historical Contacts:**

India and Yemen have deep rooted historical, cultural and trade relations. Both countries have a long history of people-to-people contacts dating back to several centuries. Yemeni traders were intermediaries for Indian trade with the Roman Empire. Subsequently, the contacts were intensified with the Hajj route from India running through Yemen, particularly Aden and Mocha.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: CIA Fact Book

<sup>2</sup> Yemen's Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour estimated in a 2009 study that there are 795, 000 unemployed persons in Yemen.

In 1839, Aden became part of the British Empire and was administered by the Bombay Presidency as a sentinel to guard the southern entrance to the Red Sea. A garrison of 2000 Indian soldiers was established in Aden and the Indian Rupee was made the official currency. In 1855, a fortnightly steamer service with Bombay was initiated by Peninsular and Orient Line. Mr M.Visvesvaraya, one of the greatest engineers of India, was sent by the British to Aden in 1906 to lay out an effective underground drainage system and to prepare a scheme for providing drinking water.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose visited Aden in 1919 and 1935. Mahatma Gandhi, accompanied by Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya and Sarojini Naidu, visited Aden on September 3, 1931, on his way to London to participate in the Second Round Table Conference, during which he was given a warm reception by the people of Aden.

The Aden administration was separated from India in April 1937 with the appointment of a Governor directly reporting to London. An Indian diplomatic mission at the level of Commissioner was set up in Aden in June 1950. The Indian Embassy in Sana'a was established in 1970.

A large number of Indian nationals, including Hindus, Muslims and Parsis, had lived in Aden since mid-1880s. One such prominent person was Cowasjee Shavaksha Dinshaw Adenwalla, who migrated from Surat to Aden in 1855. He was the founder of the Fire Temple in Aden. Many of the Indian traders later embraced the Yemeni nationality and settled down in Aden, engaging in trade and commerce. It is estimated that the Indians in Aden numbered 8,563 in 1856 and gradually increased to 15,817 in 1955. Dhirubhai Ambani, the founder of the now famous Reliance Group, also started his career as a small-time worker in Aden. There were as many as ten temples in Aden during 1950s, including a Jain Temple, an Ayyappa Temple and a Parsi Temple, of which only one is currently functional.

When the British finally withdrew from Aden in 1967, it resulted in the hasty departure of many Indians either to India or other countries. But a large number belonging to the Bohra, Khoja and Kachchi communities decided to remain behind and gradually acquired Yemeni citizenship. An estimated 100,000 people of Indian origin are concentrated in southern Yemen in Aden, Mukalla, Shihr, Lahaj, Mokha and Hodeidah.

At the same time, thousands of people of Yemeni origin, mainly from Hadramaut, migrated to India and settled down mainly in the city of Hyderabad. These age-old ties between India and Yemen are reflected now by the presence of a 300,000 strong Yemeni-origin Diaspora in India.

## **2. Profile of Indian Diaspora:**

The number of Indian nationals, which was estimated around 14000 Indian in 2009-2010, declined to an estimated 5000 by June 2011 following political instability and violence in the country. However, only around 3000 Indians are registered with the Embassy. Most of the Indians living in Yemen comprise of hospital staff, professionals, academicians, engineers, IT professionals, managerial and clerical staff in private sector, including oil companies, and skilled and semi-skilled workers. The para-medical personnel and hospital staff forms the dominant group and their current number exceeds 2500. A vast majority of the Indians hail from Kerala but a few others belong to other states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal.

## **3. Geographical spread of the Indian Diaspora**

The majority of the Indians are concentrated in the capital Sana'a and the adjoining provinces like Dhamar and Amran, besides cities like Aden, Mukalla, Hodeidah and Taiz. However, smaller numbers are scattered all over Yemen.

## **4. Known Distinguished Diaspora**

- i) Prof (Dr.)Damodar Thakur, Head Faculty of Arts, Department of English, Sana'a University.
- ii) Mr.Shyamal Choudhury, GM, Consultancy Engineering Services Limited
- iii) Prof. K Thiagarajan, Department of English, Faculty of Education, Aden University, Aden
- iv) Dr. Jairam Singh, Principal, Mahatma Gandhi School, Aden
- v) Mr S.K. Sharma, Consultant, World Bank

## **5. Concerns and Problems of Indian Diaspora:**

The Indian community in Yemen enjoys a fair degree of religious and cultural freedom. The Indian Association in Aden manages the Mataji Temple and regular services are held once a month. There is also a separate crematorium in Aden for the members of the Hindu faith. In Sana'a and other cities, people of other religious faiths can perform collective prayers within their housing complexes. There are a number of churches in Yemen, some of which have Indian bishops. There are also a few Synagogues belonging to Yemeni Jews.

The number of Indian workforce is small in Yemen when compared to other Gulf countries. Some of the para-medical personnel have filed complaints relating to low salaries and denial of other benefits. The Indian workers have often been misled by unscrupulous recruiting Agents in India and sent to Yemen on visit visas without any proper employment contracts. Even in cases where recruitment is done in a legal manner, the Employment contracts have not been attested by the Embassy. During the recent political crisis over 800 Indian nationals were repatriated back by providing free air tickets. It had also come to our notice that at least 200-300 Indians were staying illegally in Sana'a for several years without any documentation and this attracted heavy penalties from the Yemeni Immigration Department.

The Government of India has proposed a MOU on Labour, Employment and Manpower Development with the Government of Yemen, which had indicated that the Yemeni Parliament is set to pass new laws relating to workforce and the MOU suggested by India could be considered thereafter. We have suggested that a Joint Working Group (JWG) could be constituted to discuss matters relating to workforce pending finalization of the MOU.

**6. Diaspora Publications:** None

**7. Diaspora Relations:**

The Indians form the most dominant group among the expatriates in Yemen. They are held in high esteem in Yemen for their expertise, hard work and non-interference in local affairs or politics. Since many Yemenis, including some ministers and senior government officials, have studied in India, they generally have a positive attitude towards the Indians. Yemenis of Indian origin are nostalgic about India and some have formed Indo-Yemeni Friendship Societies, though such societies are not active.

During 2011, India provided 39 scholarships through ICCR to Yemeni students, besides 55 training slots under the ITEC programme.

**8. Local laws affecting Indian Diaspora:** None

9. **Diaspora Associations:**

(i) *Indian Embassy Club, Sana'a:*

President: Dr.Damodar Thakur

Tel.No. 967-733264559 e-mail: [damodar\\_thakur@yahoo.com](mailto:damodar_thakur@yahoo.com)

(ii) *Yemen Malayalee Association (Kerala Club), Sana'a:*

President: Shri Jacob Chandy,

Tel.No.967-711992899 email: aossyemen@gmail.com

(iii) *Pravasi Indian Association, Sana'a:*

President: Shri Thomas Mathew

Tel.No.967-777838490

(iv) *Karuna Welfare Trust, Sana'a (Al-Thawra Hospital):*

President: Shri Binu John

Tel.No. 967- 71262089 email: karunawelfaretrust@yahoo.com

(v) *Indian Association, Aden:*

President: Dr.Jairam Singh

Tel.No. 967- 71113611 email: jsinghaden@yahoo.com

(vi) *Pravasi Malayalee Welfare Association, Aden:*

President Shri V.T.Job,

Tel.No. 967-733834897 email: pravasimalayali@indiatimes.com

(vii) *Indian Association, Hodeidah:*

President: Shri Syed Hassan

Tel.No. 967- 711811056 email: syed\_hassan@apl.com

(viii) *Indian Association, Taiz:*

President: Shri Rajan Vishwakarma

Tel.No. 967 713094275email: [rajankr08@yahoo.com](mailto:rajankr08@yahoo.com)

(In view of the current political unrest in Yemen many Indians have left the country. So many of the associations mentioned above are not functional for the present)

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