



PRAVASI LEGAL CELL
Empowering People on Legal Front

Reg. No. 0409/2011

PLC at COVID TIMES:

A Brief Report of PLC Interventions During Covid Pandemic – 2020



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Preface

Covid-19 has added a host of new difficulties to the perilous situations of the Indian migrants, both international and national, already reeling under innumerable problems.

Here is a brief report of Pravasi Legal Cell's activities in the last six months. When the entire world was affected by a pandemic, and millions were rendered helpless, PLC was doing its job with increased efficiency and commitment, under challenging and constraining conditions. Millions have been benefitted and more will be from its activities during this period.

Though most of the works mentioned herein were intended to bring relief to Indian emigrants affected by the pandemic and benefited them directly, the impact of some of the judgements received and initiatives taken are going to be long-lasting and reformative, as you would see inside the pages.

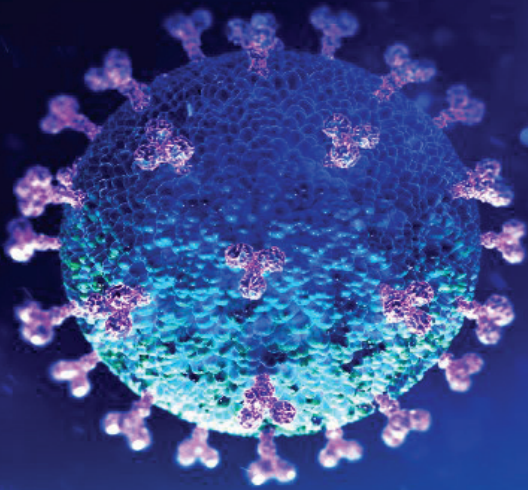
Tough times get tough people going. Congratulations to Advocate Jose Abraham and his team of committed lawyers and supporters. Sincere appreciation for the PLC international coordinators and country heads for their timely interventions and support.

The mission is incomplete and team PLC remains motivated as never before.

Happy reading.

Dr. Bins Sebastian

General Secretary, PLC



PIL at SC seeking immediate relief to Indians stranded in GCC Countries

PLC v Union of India & Ors. (W.P.(C) NO. 000936 - / 2020, 10th April, 2020)

Taking into account grievances conveyed by expatriates and media reports of the hapless condition of Indian expatriates stranded in abroad, especially in the Gulf Co-operation Council(GCC) countries, due to the Covid-19 related lock down and suspension of air travel to India, PLC filed a PIL before the Hon'ble Supreme Court on 10th April, 2020 seeking a direction to repatriate the Indian citizens in distress.

Many Indian expatriates were going through challenging times and a large section of them were struggling, in some cases even for food, accommodation and medical care, having lost their jobs. Life in the labour camps was becoming difficult. According to some reports, these camps were like prisons and hundreds of workers infected with Covid-19 were living with others.

Under these circumstances, Pravasi Legal Cell approached the Hon'ble Supreme Court with a PIL for the speedy repatriation of the Indian emigrants. Numerous representations were submitted by PLC and other organizations to the concerned authorities earlier, but none could bring the desired relief. The expatriates were in immediate need of intervention from the Government of India.

PLC through this PIL, sought measures to rescue and bring the Indian expatriates back to the country. The petition also sought steps to ensure that the emigrant Indians with Covidsymptoms had access to timely testing and medical facilities, as the absence of the same would result in high risk of transmission owing to the cramped conditions inwhich they reside.

The prayers in the petition also sought framing of schemes which will provide financial support to the returning jobless expatriates. The petition also asked for video conferencing/online arrangement to provide free medical consultation and counselingto the migrant labourerswith doctors and experts in India.



PIL filed in Supreme Court to bring back Indian workers from Gulf nations

Coronavirus: PIL filed in Supreme Court to bring back Indian workers from Gulf countries

Ashish Tripathi, CHDIL, New Delhi, APR 10 2020, 18:02 IST | UPDATED: APR 10 2020, 17:03 IST

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to spread across the globe, India has seen a significant impact on its economy and workforce. In response to the crisis, the Union government has taken several measures to support citizens and manage the situation.

In this context, a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) has been filed in the Supreme Court of India, seeking a direction to the Union government to bring back Indian migrants stranded in Gulf countries. The petition was filed by Ashish Tripathi, a resident of New Delhi, on April 10, 2020.

The petitioner claims that the Indian government has failed to take adequate steps to protect the rights and welfare of its citizens who are currently stuck in Gulf nations due to the lockdown imposed there. He requests the court to issue directions to the government to facilitate the repatriation of these workers as soon as possible.

The Supreme Court has accepted the PIL for consideration. It is expected that the court will pass a judgment on the matter in the coming days.

<https://www.barandbench.com/news/litigation/rescue-indian-migrant-workers-stranded-in-gulf-countries-as-they-are-denied-covid-19-treatment-facilities-plea-in-supreme-court>

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/covid-19-plea-in-sc-wants-govt-to-bring-back-migrants-stranded-in-gulf/article31312059.ece>

<https://www.deccanherald.com/national/national-politics/coronavirus-pil-filed-in-supreme-court-to-bring-back-indian-workers-from-gulf-countries-823715.html>

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/coronavirus-not-feasible-to-evacuate-all-indian-citizens-from-abroad-says-government/article31334918.ece>

Pravasi Legal Cell v Union of India (WP(C) Diary No. 10966/2020, 20th April, 2020.

5

lockdown period, filed a PIL before the Hon'ble Supreme Court, seeking refund for tickets booked for travel during the lockdown period. The said directive of MoCAhad left out vast majority of passengers who had booked tickets before the lockdown period *for travel during* the lockdown period.

The PIL prayed to declare the action on the part of the airlines, providing both domestic and international services, of not refunding full amount of the tickets booked for travel during the lockdown period as violative of the Civil Aviation requirement (CAR) issued by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation to the airlines dated May 22, 2008. PLC further sought direction to the Union of India to issue appropriate direction to all the airlines to refund full amount of the air tickets *booked anytime* for travel during the lockdown period.

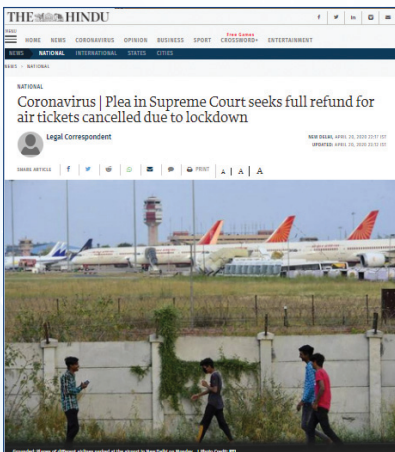
Status of the Matter: On 27th April, the Supreme Court issued notice to the Central government and the Court on a subsequent date directed the Centre, DGCA and all the airline companies to deliberate and find a solution. Pursuant to the said direction of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, DGCA submitted an affidavit formulating a Scheme for full refund for all the passengers whose tickets were cancelled due to lock down, irrespective of the booking dates.

Millions of people stand to benefit from this litigation initiated by Pravasi Legal Cell.

In News:

<https://www.financialexpress.com/lifestyle/travel-tourism/supreme-court-to-decide-on-full-refund-of-cancelled-air-tickets-during-covid-19-lockdown/1934367/>

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/plea-in-supreme-court-seeks-full-refund-for-air-tickets-cancelled-due-to-coronavirus-lockdown/article31391063.ece>



<https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/plea-in-sc-seeks-full-refund-of-tickets-for-cancelled-flights-booked-prior-to-during-lockdown-155505>

<https://www.barandbench.com/news/litigation/airlines-violating-mca-order-by-not-refunding-full-amount-for-tickets-booked-during-covid-19-lockdown-plea-in-supreme-court>

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/refund-credit-shell-available-on-air-tickets-booked-before-lockdown-centre-tells-sc/story-9RqjUvAuLEZgCq5Xi61z5L.html>

<https://www.republicworld.com/india-news/general-news/sc-to-hear-on-pleas-seeking-refund-of-airfare-on-sept-23.html>

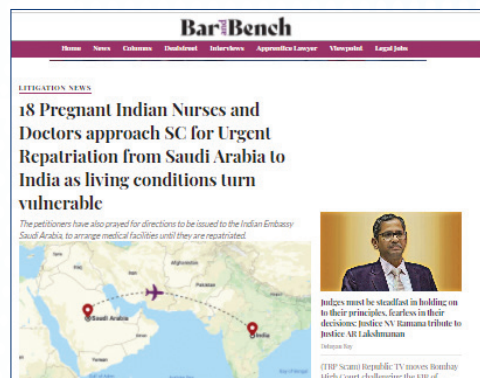
<https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/apr/21/refund-of-flight-tickets-sc-intervention-sought-2133061.html>



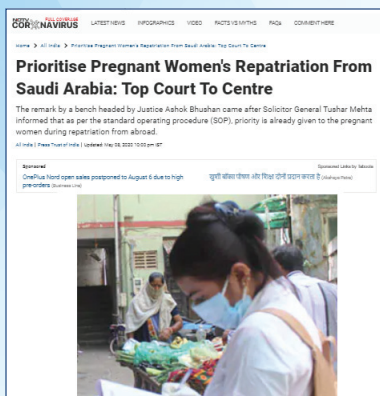
250 pregnant medical practitioners approach SC, seeking urgent repatriation from KSA

Sanisha Thomas &Ors v. Union of India &Ors, 27th April, 2020

250 Pregnant women who serve as nurses and doctors in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia approached the Hon'ble Supreme Court seeking immediate repatriation. The petitioners were in dire need of returning to the country being in advanced stages of pregnancy and had no familial support in Saudi Arabia.



The group of petitioners had booked air tickets prior to the lockdown period to travel to India, but got stranded due to the travel embargo. The Writ petition highlighted the pathos of not just the petitioners, but of all those similarly placed. The petition highlighted the urgency of the matter caused by the fact that all the petitioners were in the 3rd trimester of pregnancy and would not be in a position to travel once they enter the 36th week of gestation.



The petition also mentioned about the difficulties they would face to consult a gynecologist as they would have to travel about 200 km or more from their hospitals, which are situated in remote areas of Saudi Arabia. The difficulty has been aggravated by the decision of the hospital to treat Covid-19 patients alone for the time-being.

It was also rightly pointed out in the petition that urgent intervention was required in the issue as it was a matter of life of not just the petitioners but also of their unborn children. The

petition prayed the SC to direct the respondents to make appropriate arrangements to rescue and bring the petitioners back to India immediately. It also prayed to issue directions to the Embassy of India in KSA to take appropriate measures to ensure that petitioners have access to proper medical facilities while they travel to India.

Status of the Matter: On 8th May, 2020, Supreme Court disposed off the matter with a direction to the Centre to take appropriate steps to grant priority in the repatriation process to woman whose pregnancy is in advance stages. Pursuant to the intervention of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, Ministry of External Affairs, Govt. of India took this matter seriously and pregnant women got priority in the repatriation process eventually. It was another major victory for the efforts of Pravasi Legal Cell during the Covid times. Relying upon the judgment passed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court, Various High Courts issued similar orders to protect the interests of pregnant Indian women emigrants.

In News:

<https://livelaw.in/top-stories/more-than-250-pregnant-nurses-and-doctors-stranded-in-saudi-arabia-plea-in-sc-seeks-urgent-repatriation-155862>

<https://www.mathrubhumi.com/gulf/saudi-arabia/indian-pregnant-women-needs-to-go-to-india-petition-filed-in-supreme-court-1.4721242>

<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/coronavirus-india-prioritise-pregnant-womens-repatriation-from-saudi-supreme-court-to-centre-2225709>

<https://www.barandbench.com/news/litigation/18-pregnant-indian-nurses-doctors-approach-sc-for-urgent-repatriation-from-saudi-arabia-to-india-as-living-conditions-turn-vulnerable>

Writ Petition at SC for repatriation of Indians granted amnesty by Kuwait

Geetha P.K. VUOI

Pravasi Legal Cell, with the help of its Kuwait Chapter, filed a writ petition before the Hon'ble Supreme Court seeking directions to Central Government to make appropriate arrangements to repatriate more than ten thousand Indian emigrants who were granted amnesty by the State of Kuwait.

The background of the writ petition is connected to the general amnesty granted by the State of Kuwait in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak to all those who do not have valid residency permits in the country. The petitioners in the matter were among the thousands of Indian emigrants who came within the ambit of the said amnesty scheme. They were unable to travel back to India due to the stringent travel restrictions imposed by the Indian Government.

The petition highlighted the challenges faced by these migrant Indians living in deportation centres in Kuwait. The petition pointed out that the emigrants were also in immense stress and fear as they are prone to contracting Covid-19 in the overcrowded deportation centres. It is probably seeing the aforesaid scenario that the State of Kuwait also offered flights for repatriating the above-mentioned vulnerable

section of Indian emigrants. It is in the light of this offer of Kuwait, that the petition prayed for a direction to the respondents to permit these flights to arrive in India.

The petition further highlighted that the petitioners must be repatriated expeditiously as they are presently living in Kuwait at the mercy of the State, and that the amnesty granted to them was time bound. The Indian migrants who were granted amnesty were initially directed to leave the country by 30.04.2020, failing which they would be subjected to



imprisonment. It is also pertinent to mention that the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Civil Aviation were also arrayed as parties to this instant writ petition.

Status of the matter: The matter was disposed off on 15-05-2020. The Union government was directed to treat the petition as a representation and dispose of expeditiously. Pursuant to the intervention of the Supreme Court, Government of India, arranged more flights to Kuwait and by the end of June 2020, more than eight thousand Indians who were languishing at the deportation centres in Kuwait came back to India. It was another proud achievement for the PLC team.

In News:

<https://gulfnnews.com/world/gulf/kuwait/1st-group-of-illegal-indian-workers-leave-kuwait-1.71690548>

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/may/12/plea-in-sc-seeks-repatriation-of-indian-migrant-workers-languishing-in-detention-camps-in-kuwait-2142422.html>

PIL at SC seeking repatriation of bodies of Indians died of Non-Covid causes

Pravasi Legal Cell v Union of India, 25th April, 2020.

Pravasi Legal Cell filed a Public Interest Litigation before the Hon'ble Supreme Court seeking removal of obstacles in the process of repatriation of bodies of Indian expatriates who died due to accidents and Non-Covid related ailments. The PIL sought withdrawal of a direction from the Govt. of India, which made a No-Objection-Certificate from the Ministry of Home Affairs mandatory for repatriation of bodies of Indian expatriates who died of Non-Covid causes.

As a result of the said direction, mortal remains of a few persons which arrived at the Delhi Airport from UAE were sent back to UAE. It created an uproar among the Pravasi Community, especially in the Middle East.



In this background, PLC approached the Hon'ble Supreme Court to withdraw this new requirement of an NOC from the Ministry of Home Affairs. The filing of the petition by PLC was widely reported in the National media and on the same day evening, Govt. of India withdrew the said requirement. The issue was resolved without warranting the interference of judiciary.

Status of the Matter: The Central Government subsequently withdrew the direction and the petition was withdrawn.

In News:

<https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/plea-in-sc-seeks-repatriation-of-mortal-remains-of-indians-died-abroad-due-to-non-covid-diseases-read-petition-155768>



Petition at SC seeking direction to make apt use of ICWF for repatriation

Pravasi Legal Cell v Union of India & Ors. (WP(C) 558 of 2020)

A writ petition was filed before the Supreme Court, seeking directions to make apt use of the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) available with the Indian Embassies towards repatriation of the economically weaker Indian Expatriates including migrant labourers stranded in Gulf countries.

Status of the Matter: The matter was disposed off on the submission of the Ld. Solicitor General that the issue pertains to matter of policy of the Government and the Court cannot pass any direction to the usage of the Community Welfare Fund. Hence the Supreme Court, as per the order dated 19-06-2020, granted liberty to the petitioner to make appropriate representation to the Government of India, in accordance with law. The major impact of the above-mentioned matter is that the Central Government directed various embassies and consulates to use ICWF fund effectively. It is pertinent to mention herein that more than thousand people were repatriated to



THE NEWS SCROLL

19 JUNE 2020 Last Updated on 14 PM | 10000 SMART

SC dismisses plea for using ICWF for repatriation of stranded Indians



New Delhi, Jun 19 (PTI) The Supreme Court Friday dismissed a plea seeking a direction to the Centre to make appropriate use of Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF), aimed at assisting overseas Indian nationals in times of distress and emergency, for repatriation of economically weaker persons including migrant labourers who are stranded in Gulf countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A bench headed by Justice Adesh Bhushan, however, said it would be open to the petitioner to make an appropriate representation to the government which may be considered in accordance with law.

Solicitor General Toshar Mahesh, appearing for the Centre, told the court that these are "matter of policy" and if the petitioner makes a representation to the government, the same shall be considered by the Centre.

"We are of the view that no direction can be issued as prayed in the writ petition. The writ petition is accordingly dismissed. However, it shall be open for the petitioner to make an appropriate representation to the Government of India which may be considered in accordance with law," said the bench, also comprising Justices S K Kail and M R Shah, which heard the matter through video.

India from Malaysia alone with free air tickets procured using the Indian Community Welfare Fund.

In News:

https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/plea-in-sc-for-use-of-icwf-to-repatriate-economically-weaker-indians-stranded-abroad-120050700538_1.html

<https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/plea-in-sc-seeks-invocation-of-indian-community-welfare-fund-for-repatriation-of-economically-weaker-citizens-migrant-labourers-stranded-abroad-156328>

<https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/sc-dismisses-plea-for-using-icwf-for-repatriation-of-stranded-indians/1871334>

<https://www.theweek.in/wire-updates/national/2020/06/19/lqd21-virus-sc-repatriation.html>



PIL against Kerala Govt.'s decision to make Covid-free-certificate mandatory

Pravasi Legal Cell Vs State of Kerala, 17th June, 2020

PLC file a Writ Petition before the High Court of Kerala primarily seeking the quashing of a decision of the Government of Kerala that made mandatory to carry Corona Free certificate from the country of travel w.e.f. 20th June, 2020.

It is relevant to mention that this controversy began with a circular dated 11th June, 2020 issued by the Principal Secretary to the Kerala Government, which insisted that passengers boarding private chartered flights to travel to Kerala must carry with them Corona Free certificate from the country they travel from.

The petition alleged that the direction in question was in contravention to the regulations and guidelines formulated by the Central Government. It also mentioned about the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) dated 24.05.2020 issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs regarding repatriation of Indians stranded abroad, which allowed repatriations of all Indians irrespective of whether they were Covid-19 positive or negative. The petition also mentioned that the SOP dated 26.05.2020 issued by Ministry of Civil Aviation regarding protocols for repatriation of stranded Indians

through private chartered flights also did not require an Indian national to carry out a test of Covid-19 before travelling to India.

The petition also emphasized that compliance of the direction would not be possible for the Indian expatriates, not only due to expensive Covid-19 tests, but also because many countries did not allow asymptomatic people to get tested. The petition further stated that the direction was discriminatory as it did not apply to passengers brought to India through the *Vande Bharat Mission*, and hence was in violation of Article 14 and Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

The petition also pointed out that no other state in India had issued similar directions such as the instant one issued by the Kerala Government. The petition also cited the Stay Order issued by the Hon'ble Supreme Court on a similar decision taken by the Orissa Government. It is also pertinent to mention that PLC had earlier submitted a representation to the Hon'ble CM of Kerala seeking withdrawal of the direction in question.

Status of the Matter: The matter was disposed off in view of the fact that the Kerala Government subsequently withdrew the controversial direction.

In News:

<https://www.livelaw.in/news-updates/plea-in-kerala-hc-against-govt-order-mandating-covid-testing-prior-to-travel-to-kerala-read-petition-158534>



PIL at Kerala HC, seeking free legal aid to Pravasi Community

Pravasi Legal Cell Vs Union of India, 24th July, 2020

A PIL filed by Pravasi Legal Cell before the High Court of Kerala, sought for providing free legal aid to the pravasi community. The petition stated that the Indian Constitution and the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 have specific provisions for granting legal aid to Indian citizens, but that the Indian citizens living abroad were not receiving such benefits.

The petition further stated that the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) constituted in 2009 was not being effectively used for providing free legal aid to Indian emigrants. The grim position of Indian expatriates dying abroad and the situation of innumerable

Indians returning home after losing job and without receiving due salaries and end of service benefits etc. were also highlighted in the petition.

The petition prayed that the vast segment of aggrieved Indian expatriates be provided free legal aid through the concerned Indian Embassies to help them obtain their unpaid wages and other service benefits.

Status of the Matter: The matter was heard by the Division Bench consisting of Chief Justice S. Manikumar and Justice Shaji P. Chaliand directed the Centre and the State of Kerala to file replies. There are sufficient systems in place to ensure free legal aid for the pravasis, citing examples of *madad*, e-migrate under the Ministry of External Affairs, Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) available with the Indian Embassies and NORKA of the Government of Kerala, the union and state governments submitted in their respective responses to the Court. The Court expressed its satisfaction over the existing systems as presented by the governments and expressed its hope that no Indians are left in peril without receiving proper legal aid.

The central government also submitted in its affidavit that the Ministry of External Affairs and Indian Embassies in various countries and the Indian missions would ensure that necessary legal aid is provided to Indian citizens in filing for their rightful wages and other provisions. Indian citizens in need of free legal aid abroad could request for help through the community welfare wings of the Indian embassies, *madad* or e-migrate portals of the ministry of external affairs.

The union government also made it clear in the affidavit that the embassies have ensured the service of lawyers and those citizens who had to return to the country without being able to file labor complaints etc. could do the same to claim their rightful wages and compensations through the Indian Embassies by issuing power of attorney. Relatives of Indians who died abroad during the lock down period could also apply for insurance and end of service benefits using these provisions, the affidavit stated.

Most importantly, disposing off the matter, the Kerala High Court has made it clear in a 62-page historical judgment that emigrant Indian citizens are eligible for free legal aid. This would provide a basis for Indian emigrants to seek free legal aid abroad and a ground to approach judicial forums, if this right was denied.

In News:

<https://www.mathrubumi.com/gulf/bahrain/paravasi-legal-cell-1.5041213>

PLC at Kerala High Court regarding Pravasi Welfare Fund

Pravasi Legal Cell Vs State of Kerala, 06/08/2020

Pravasi Legal Cell filed a petition at the Kerala High Court against an existing rule that by the age of 60 a pravasIndian should take membership in the Pravasi Welfare Fundscheme to avail of its benefits.

It was back in 2008 that the Kerala Government, with the objective of helping Keralite emigrants who return to the state, enacted the Pravasi Welfare Act,2008. In accordance with the Act, a pension board and welfare fund were constituted for the welfare of the returning pravasis.

The petitionstated that during the Covid period many expatriates were returning to Kerala and were interested in taking membership in the Pravasi Welfare Fund to avail of the pension scheme.The petition statedthat the age limit for the availing pension benefit is discriminatory and that many among the returnees were above the age of 60. Petition further stated that all the returning Pravasis should be able to get benefits of the Pravasi Welfare Fund.

In this matter, the Hon'ble High Court accepted the petition and directed Pravasi Welfare Fund to take a decision on the demand of the petitioner within three months.



II. Representations submitted during the Covid Pandemic

Pravasi Legal Cell submitted numerous representations to various authorities seeking their intervention to solve issues faced by the Indian emigrants during the period of Covid-19 pandemic. Brief reports on the major representations are provided below:

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) | 09th March, 2020

The Consulate General of the State of Kuwait had issued a circular dated 04/03/2020 with the direction to conduct the PCR test for COVID-19 from medical centres in India approved by the Gulf Health Council. This directive caused significant inconvenience

to many Indians whose Visas were about to expire and had to return to Kuwait. Returning within the required timeframe was becoming difficult as the test centres mentioned in the circular were not well equipped to provide quick results. PLC submitted a representation to the Ministry of External Affairs, seeking interventions against the said circular issued by the Embassy of Kuwait. The circular was withdrawn on a later date, putting an end to the difficulties faced.

Ministry of Finance | 21st March 2020

Keeping in mind the financial implications of Covid-19, especially regard to job loss etc., PLC submitted a representation to the Ministry of Finance seeking moratorium on repayment of loans etc for emigrant Indians. The government later took a decision and granted moratorium on all the debts in the entire country. The moratorium initially issued for 3 months was extended to 6 months later.

Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) | 23rd March, 2020

Seeking intervention against the arbitrary ticketing policy of airline companies, including Air India, PLC submitted a memorandum to the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA). According to this arbitrary policy with regard to cancellation of tickets during the lockdown period, hefty cancellation charges were levied on the customers. In most cases, the passengers ended up losing the entire ticketing amount on cancelation of the ticket, as a result. There were media reports that interventions were made in the instant issue. It is pertinent to mention that PLC approached the Court against the non-refund of air tickets that got cancelled due to lockdown. The Central Government in the instant matter has taken a positive stand on refunding of tickets.

MEA | 27th March, 2020

Seeing that India has no policy or guidelines with regard to the repatriation of mortal remains of Indians during times of crisis, an epidemic or pandemic such as the current Covid pandemic, PLC submitted a representation to the Ministry of External Affairs, requesting to frame relevant policy for the repatriation of mortal remains in such times. PLC later approached the Supreme Court, seeking a direction to the government on this. Subsequently, the process of repatriation of mortal remains of persons died of non-covid causes got smoothened.

MEA | 09th April, 2020

A representation was submitted to the Ministries of Civil Aviation and External Affairs seeking urgent intervention for rescuing Indian expatriates stranded in different countries in the Gulf region, during the Covid pandemic. Subsequently, the government

framed Standard Operating Procedure regarding repatriation of expatriates through the Vande Bharat Mission. The first SOP was released on 05th May, 2020.

MoCA and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare | 23rd April, 2020

On getting to know grievances about bodies of Indian expats who died of non-Covid causes were lying stranded in airports due to new guidelines that made mandatory to get clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs, PLC submitted a representation to the Union government, seeking immediate intervention. Post this representation submitted to MoCA to permit repatriation of mortal remains of expatriates who died due to accidents and other non-Covid related ailments, the process of repatriation of mortal remains eased.

MEA | 02nd May, 2020

On receiving numerous grievances from Indian Expats far and wide for making request on their behalf for easing repatriation process, a representation was made to the Ministry of External Affairs, for making repatriation process of stranded Indian expatriates more effective. The 6-point proposal submitted by PLC was accepted by the Government of India.

CBSE | 03rd May, 2020

The representation was submitted to CBSE against the demand of fees that was aggregate of tuition fee and all other charges by the CBSE affiliated Indian Schools in the Sultanate of Kuwait. Fees were collected also for service which were not being provided. This also brought various malpractices adopted by the CBSE affiliated Indian Schools there to the attention of the authorities.

MEA | 06th May, 2020

The residents of Tughlaqabad Extension in Delhi had grievances that there were some persons in the area who were not complying with COVID norms issued by the Government and were adding to the panic created by the Pandemic. PLC submitted a representation on behalf of the residents, seeking redressal of grievances. There were perceptible changes in the scenario post submission of the representation.

MEA | 06th May, 2020

A representation was made to the Ministry of External Affairs, seeking urgent intervention for repatriation of a body from Kuwait. The person had died under suspicious circumstances. The representation helped the repatriation process of the Indian's body from Kuwait with the help of the Indian Mission there.

MEA | 08th May, 2020

A representation was submitted to the Ministry of External Affairs, seeking urgent intervention for repatriating a pregnant mother and her 6yr old child from Bahrain to India. This issue got highlighted due to the representation and they were repatriated to India subsequently.

MoCA | 11th May, 2020

PLC made an intervention and submitted a representation against exorbitant airfare being charges by Airline Companies in times of covid-19.

The issue got highlighted due to the intervention by PLC.

MEA | 19th May, 2020

PLC Africa Chapter had received numerous grievances from Indian Nationals residing in different countries within Africa and who were unable to travel back to the country. Representations were submitted to the Ministry of External Affairs, seeking permission for repatriation of Indian Nationals from Africa through Chartered flights. Later, the Government initiated repatriation of Indians through the Vande Bharat Mission and needy Indians could travel back home without much hurdles.

MEA | 20th May, 2020

We received grievances from the Kannadiga Pravasi Organizations that numerous Kannadigas were waiting to be repatriated from Saudi Arabia. On their request, a representation was submitted to the MEA seeking urgent intervention for the repatriation of Kannadigas stranded in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Kannadigas later started returning to the country through the Vande Bharat Mission.

MEA | 20th May, 2020

PLC submitted a representation to the Ministry of External Affairs, seeking urgent intervention to repatriate Indian Nationals who were granted amnesty by the State of Kuwait. Unfortunately, those Indians were still languishing in deportation centres in Kuwait and ran the risk of getting arrested again after the prescribed period to leave the country. The Government intervened in the issue to ameliorate the situation. The intervention was successful as media reports indicated that many who were languishing in deportation centres were repatriated to the Country.

CM of Kerala | 27th May, 2020

A representation was sent to the Chief Minister of Kerala against a directive that it issued. As per the directive, the Indian expats returning to the state were to pay

for the institutional quarantine charges. The representation submitted requested the withdrawal of the decision. Later the government decided to reverse the directive.

MEA | 1st June, 2020

PLC on receiving numerous grievances that many pregnant Indian expats were eagerly waiting to be repatriated to the Country, submitted a representation to the Ministry of External Affairs, seeking urgent intervention to give priority to pregnant women, especially those in the advance stages of pregnancy, in the repatriation process. Subsequently, the government decided to give priority to pregnant women and their families in the repatriation process and this became a precedence even in interstate travels within India during the pandemic.

Indian High Commissioner to Australia | 2nd June, 2020

Urgent intervention was sought through a representation to the Indian High Commissioner to Australia for the repatriation of an ailing Indian senior citizen and his wife from Melbourne, Australia.

CM of Kerala | 03rd June, 2020

A representation was made to the Chief Minister of Kerala seeking intervention to alleviate the concerns of stranded expatriates who returned to Kerala from abroad. The grievance of the expatriates pertained to the overall poor implementation of institutional quarantine policy and lack of communication and cooperation. Request was made to the State Government to issue fresh guidelines to the expatriates and all the concerned departments with respect to the quarantine facilities, so that the returning expatriates had more clarity regarding the quarantine centres, transportation facilities, and facilities they would receive in the Covid Care Centres and Institutional Quarantine Centres.

MEA | 09th June, 2020

A representation was made to the Ministry of External Affairs, seeking urgent intervention to alleviate the concerns of Indian expatriates in Bahrain. The representation primarily demanded that the Indian expatriates who visit the embassy during the prevailing extreme weather conditions and Covid-19 times be treated in a more humane manner.

Prime Minister's Office | 10th June, 2020

A National NRI Commission with judicial powers has been a demand of the Indian expats for a long time. The demand grew due to issues such as such as illegal

termination of jobs abroad in the background of the Covid-19 pandemic. This was yet another representation PLC made in this unmet demand.

The Ambassador of India to UAE | 15th June, 2020

A representation was made to the Indian Ambassador in the UAE, requesting intervention for the speedy repatriation of an Indian woman who was in desperate conditions and wanted to be repatriated to India.

MEA | 20th June, 2020

The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) is a fund that had been constituted primarily to redress the grievances of the emigrant Indians. The need to make use of it had become a need like never before during the COVID-19 time, mentioned a representation that PLC submitted to the Ministry of External Affairs. The representation sought apt usage of the ICWF towards repatriation of the economically weak Indian expatriates. A PIL was also filed with respect to the issue. The petition was disposed off on the ground that the issue involved is a policy matter.

Chief Secretary of Kerala | 1st July, 2020

There were numerous grievances and media reports about the discrimination and indifferent treatment that the returning expatriates had to face after returning to Kerala in the background of the Covid pandemic. A representation was submitted to the Chief Secretary of Kerala seeking intervention to alleviate the social stigma caused to Keralites returning from foreign countries and other Indian states with rampant presence of Covid.

Finance Minister of India | 10th July, 2020

A request was made to the Finance Minister of India to utilize funds in dormant NRI bank accounts for the rehabilitation of returning emigrants. PLC is yet to hear from the Ministry on this matter.

Ministry of External Affairs | 9th June, 2020

A representation was submitted to the Ministry of External Affairs seeking urgent intervention to alleviate the concerns of Indian expatriates in Bahrain. The primary request was regarding the vacant post of the Ambassador of India in Bahrain, keeping in mind the critical pandemic times.

Ministry of Finance | 23rd August, 2020

Considering the needs of various categories of pravasis returning due to the Covid situations, a representation was submitted to MoF, seeking comprehensive

rehabilitation scheme for the returnees. It suggested a few measures to be considered such as quickly registering all the expatriates under the skill mapping initiative (SWADES), expediting clearance of claims under PravasiBimaYojna, financial support to the relatives of the pravasis who died due to Covid-19, awareness programmes for re-integration of returning pravasis, and establishment of a National Pravasi Commission with judicial powers. The representation was forwarded and taken up by about 40 Members of the Parliament.



III. Webinars Organized by PLC during the Covid Pandemic

Pravasi Legal Cell organised many webinars on various issues during the Covid period. The webinars and following discussions organised at the initiative of various Chapters of PLC helped the participants remain connected and empowered during these difficult times.

23rd May 2020 | Covid 19: Employees' rights in the United Kingdom

This webinar was in fact an online "Niyamavedi (a series initiated by PLC to discuss on relevant legal issues). The keynote speaker was Mr. BaijuThittala, solicitor of the senior courts of England & Wales, Councillor Cambridge City District, and the PLC Country Head, UK. The speaker emphasised on the Furlough scheme of UK and its various implications.

29th May 2020 | Covid-19: Judicial pronouncements on Prisoners' Rights

PLC and Human Rights Law Network (HRLN) jointly organised a webinar on Covid-19: Judicial pronouncements on Prisoners' Rights. The keynote speaker of the webinar was Adv. Ritu Kumar of HRLN. The keynote address highlighted the general concerns connected with Prisons of India. The address also laid emphasis on the 23rd March judgement of Hon'ble Supreme Court in the matter, Contagion of Covid-19 virus suo motu WP (C) 1/2020.

07th June 2020 | COVID-19 - Challenges faced by Pregnant Woman

The Kerala Chapter of PLC organised a webinar on the Challenges faced by Pregnant Woman during Covid-19 pandemic. The keynote speaker of the webinar was Dr. Sanam Basheer, M.D. of City Hospital, Ernakulam and a prominent Gynaecologist. The talk not only focussed on the various challenges pregnant women can encounter in these Covid times, but also emphasised on the need to prevent oneself from contracting Covid-19. The talk also stressed on the need to adhere by the guidelines issued by the gov'ts and health departments.

13th June, 2020 | COVID-19: Ways to overcome Stress

Keeping in mind the increase in rate of suicides and problems associated with mental stress due to COVID-19, Kerala Chapter of PLC organised a webinar on ways to overcome stress. Key address was by a prominent Psychiatrist, Dr. S.D. Singh (MBBS, DPM(EPS)). Dr. Singh in his address emphasised on the need to minimise expectations in life. The importance of humour and physical activity was also stressed upon in the talk.

15th June, 2020 | Covid and Impact on Education and Media

Keynote speaker of the seminar on Covid and Impact on Education and Media organised by PLC was renowned academician Prof. Ujjwal K. Chaudhary, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Adamas University, Kolkata. The first part of the presentation focussed on the changes that would have to be incorporated in the education sector and the second part stressed upon the impact of Covid-19 on media. Prof. Chaudhary in his talk also suggested ways to make India completely digitised.

21st June, 2020 | Covid Pandemic: Impact on Migrant Labourers and Way Forward

Keeping in mind the drastic impact of Covid on migrants, PLC organised a webinar on the impact of Covid-19 on migrant labourers and way forward. The keynote speaker was Sh. M.P. Joseph, a former Indian and UN Civil Servant. The talk delved on the problems of the migrants within the country and the plight of NRIs.

27th June, 2020 | Can Timely Justice Delivery happen in India?

Kerala Chapter of PLC, in association with RTI Kerala Federation & KSV Kochi, organised a webinar on whether timely justice delivery can happen in India. The keynote speaker was Mr. Shailesh Gandhi, former Information Commissioner. The speaker emphasised on the need to deliver justice timely. The role of the citizen, as well as the need to fill the vacancy of judges were also stressed upon in the talk.

05th July, 2020 | Socio Economic Impact of Covid on South Asian Migrants

The theme address made by Ms. Roshee Lamichhane, Asst. Professor, School of Management, Kathmandu University delved on the situation of South Asian countries. The adverse impact of Covid-19 on the South Asian region, comprising of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, especially the hardships faced by those involved in the informal sector, was highlighted by the speaker. The talk also highlighted the need to create new employment opportunities in rural areas and the need to utilise skills of those returning from abroad. It was also suggested that governments of all the south Asian Countries must adopt a balanced and equitable development model and priority must be given to enhance connectivity and to improve IT, Agriculture, health care and education sector.

25th July, 2020 | Welfare of Guest Workers and Kerala High Court Verdict

The Kerala Chapter of PLC organised a webinar on the welfare of guest workers and the Kerala High Court's verdict on the same. The keynote speaker was Adv. Eldhose Kunnappilly (MLA). Other speakers of the webinar were Mr. Nazer T. K., Assistant Labour Officer, Mr. Mujeeb Rahman, SOPMA President and Mrs. Savitha Shenoy, KSACS Ernakulam Region Project Officer. The talks revolved around the need to create a database of Migrant workers in Kerala. It was also the unanimous view of all the speakers that awareness about hygiene and employment rights must spread among the migrant workers.

27th July, 2020 | Police Atrocities during the Covid Pandemic

The Kerala Chapter of PLC in association with the RTI Kerala Federation and Rotary Club of Aroor organised a webinar on police atrocities during the Covid pandemic. The Keynote speaker of the webinar was Sh. P. Chandrashekhar, Advocate, High Court of Kerala.

16th August, 2020 | How to utilise time during Covid Pandemic productively?

The Kerala Chapter of PLC organised a webinar on how to productively utilise time during Covid pandemic. The keynote speaker was Mr. Ram Mohan R., former General Manager, SUPPLYCO and Joint Controller, Legal Metrology. The speaker shared a few tips for the proper utilisation of time in these challenging times.

23rd August, 2020 | National Education Policy: Expectations and Challenges

In light of the New Education Policy 2020 rolled out by the Government of India, Kerala Chapter of PLC decided to organise a webinar to understand the salient features of the new National Education Policy. The keynote speaker was Dr. Arun Kumar K., Asst. Professor, Kerala University and a prominent face in the media.

13th September, 2020 | Secrets to Happy Living

Kerala Chapter of PLC, keeping in mind the growing turbulence in families due to the dire effects of Covid-19, organised a webinar on the aforementioned theme. The keynote speaker was Mr. Ram Mohan R., former General Manager, SUPPLYCO and Joint Controller, Legal Metrology.

22nd September, 2020 | Human Rights Violations during Covid Times

The Kerala Chapter of PLC in association with RTI Federation Kerala organised another webinar on human rights violations during covid times. The keynote speaker Mr. P. Mohandas, Judicial Member, Kerala State Human Rights Commission.

26th September, 2020 | Problems of Indian Emigrants during Covid Pandemic and the Role of PLC

The Tamil Nadu Chapter of PLC organised a webinar on the problems of Indian emigrants during the covid pandemic and the role of PLC. The Keynote speaker was Adv. Jose Abraham, Advocate-on-Record, Supreme Court of India and the Global President of PLC. Hon'ble Sh. S. Venkatesan, Member of Parliament, shared his message. The webinar discussed the problems of Indian emigrants, the works of PLC during these times and the possibilities and challenges before PLC.





PRAVASI LEGAL CELL

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