Migrant workers abandoned by Joannou & Paraskevaides (Overseas) Ltd (In Liquidation) (‘JPO’)in Saudi Arabia su

Monday 18 March, 2019

Modern Slavery: We understand from the Indian authorities that following our intervention that Mr Ganapathy Malayandi Vairaban (pictured) one of the migrant workers abandoned by Joannou & Paraskevaides (Overseas) Ltd (In Liquidation) (‘JPO’) in Saudi Arabia who was depilated by and suffering from a kidney disease has been repatriated to his family in Uttarakhand. We hope that he receives the medical treatment he needs to recover.

A migrant worker from Bangladesh suffering from health problems was not so lucky; he died and his remains were recently repatriated.

There are at least 1,000 other migrant workers victims of Joannou & Paraskevaides (Overseas) Ltd (In Liquidation) (‘JPO’) remaining in Saudi Arabia, predominantly Indian nationals despairing to be repatriated to their home countries.

What is preventing these migrant workers from returning home?

Joannou & Paraskevaides (Overseas) Ltd (In Liquidation) (‘JPO’) in Saudi Arabia is one of the multinational construction companies owned by the two Cypriot families Joannou & Paraskevaides

JPO is currently in the process of going into voluntary liquidation. The process started in February 2018. Part of the work force comprised of Cypriots nationals. Early in the liquidation process, JPO ensured that the Cypriot employees were relocated, given alternative employment or repatriated to Cyprus with their full salaries and end of service benefits in full. However, the fate of the predominantly Indian work migrants was deemed not to be a priority by JPO; the migrant workers were not paid their respective salaries and no provisions were made to pay their end of service benefits. In fact the payroll and Human Resources aaspect relating to the migrant workers was transferred to a Saudi registered company, ‘Joannou & Paraskevaides Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’ (‘JPKSA’).

JPKSA operates under Saudi Arabian Law. There is no positive indication as to whether they are going to recover the assets belonging to JPO and how far they going to go to recover and liquidate the assets of JPO to settle the outstanding salaries due to the migrant workers and settle the end of service benefits due to them.

The fact that JPKSA was established to deal with the salaries and payroll of the South Asian migrant workers appears to be calculated and discriminatory.

The migrant workers are desperate and despairing to be repatriated. They have been detained in the most appalling accommodation which had to be recently cleaned and fumigated. They have been in this predicament for one year. Despite being resigned to the fact that they unlikely to recover their overdue salaries and the end of service benefits, the migrant workers want to return home to their families immediately.

Many of the men are experiencing serious health problems. A number have suffered heart attacks, paralysis and hypertension. They do not have the funds to pay for the treatment. Further, some are reluctant to have any medical treatment in Saudi treatment. Neither JPO or the Indian authorities have provided funds for any medical treatment.

In addition, the migrant workers are experiencing a host of problems back at home; their children are prevented from going to school since their school fees have not been paid; members of families are ill or have passed on and the migrant workers are defenceless to help or support their families. This is adding to their anxieties. They are currently spending endless days waiting to return home. Neither the Indian authorities or the representatives of JPO or JPKSA have the courtesy to keep the men advised and/or explain exactly what are they waiting for? Any money due to them can be easily transferred to their respective bank accounts which they can access in India.

What is Preventing the Migrant Workers from Leaving Saudi Arabia?

The migrant workers work permits and visas have expired. They have incurred fines and penalties. Under Saudi law, these outstanding fines and penalties have to be settled before the migrant workers can

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obtain an ‘Iqama’ which is a sign off by the employers to facilitate the exit papers to leave Saudi Arabia. The migrant workers simply do not have the funds to pay the fines and penalties which total approximately 8,000 Saudi riyals per person.

What can be done?

The Saudi authorities waive the fines and penalties on humanitarian grounds;

Joannou & Paraskevaides pay them from one of their charitable trusts;

The Indian authorities discharge the outstanding amounts. The Indian Government has an ‘Indian Community Welfare Fund’ established to help Indian nationals experiencing difficulties abroad.

Not doing is not a solution.

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