

RISE IN DEMAND FOR INDIA-TRAINED NURSES AFTER PANDEMIC: DATA

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An FICCI report states that the migration has left India with a shortage of nursing staff. Vijay Soneji

Following a lull over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a continued sharp rise in the demand for nurses trained in India from several countries, including Ireland, Malta, Germany, the Netherlands, Finland, the U.K. (Wales), and Belgium, government data show.

India ranks second after the Philippines in the number of nurses working overseas as they pursue better employment opportunities, higher salaries, and other benefits.

“Currently, there is a growing demand for nurses, especially in the ambulance services, critical care, mental health, and geriatric care sectors. There is also a demand for medical technicians,” said Anoop K.A., Managing Director of the Kerala Government’s Overseas Development and Employment Promotion Consultants (ODEPC).

Overall, only 300 nurses were recruited abroad through the ODEPC in 2019-20. But between August 2020 and February 2021, the organisation sent over 420 nurses to the UAE, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the U.K. “And this number is on the rise,” Mr. Anoop said.

Evelyn P. Kannan, secretary-general, Trained Nurses Association of India, Delhi, said that worldwide, countries were strengthening their healthcare systems after the pandemic.

“We are definitely seeing a growing demand for trained nurses. Increased salary, healthcare benefits, family visa, etc., make the shift a lucrative deal,” Ms. Kannan said.

Better prospects

The sentiment is echoed by nurses — even those working in Central government hospitals in the national capital. “In India, working as a nurse is becoming challenging and less attractive with long duty hours and comparatively less pay. The growth prospects are also limited,” a staff nurse at a government hospital in Delhi, who did not want to be named, said.

“Strengthening healthcare workforce in India: the 2047 Agenda”, a report by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), says: “Nursing is becoming less desirable as a profession and is witnessing increased migration to foreign countries, which has left India facing one of its worst shortages of nursing staff in recent years.”

The report adds: “There is a great need for qualified nurses who are not only technically sound but also have specialised in various fields and are up to date on the most recent medical technology.”

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