

Uttar Pradesh & Bihar to GCC Migration Corridor, District-Level Analysis 2026

District-level breakdown of the corridor that now sends nearly half of all Indian blue-collar emigrants to the GCC. Covers the rise of Eastern UP and North-Central Bihar as structural manpower hubs, the leading source districts (Gorakhpur, Azamgarh, Basti, Siwan, Gopalganj, Bhojpur, Saran), the trade specialisation by district, the remittance flow back into household economies, the social and demographic effects on source villages, and the supply-side implications for GCC employers planning 2026-2028 manpower strategy. Built from eMigrate state-and-district disaggregation, RBI district-level remittance data, and qualitative field reporting.

Published 2026-04-29 - Updated 2026-04-29 - <https://www.mahadmanpowers.co.in/research/uttar-pradesh-bihar-migration-corridor-a>

46%

Combined share of total Indian-to-GCC emigration originating from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in 2025, up from 31% in 2014.

Key Statistics

- 180K** Combined annual emigration clearances from UP and Bihar to GCC destinations (2025)
Source: eMigrate state-wise breakdown
- 7** UP and Bihar districts that each send 5,000+ workers to the GCC annually (Gorakhpur, Azamgarh, Basti, Siwan, Gopalganj, Bhojpur, Saran)
Source: eMigrate district-level data
- \$10.3B** Combined annual GCC-sourced remittance flow into UP and Bihar households (FY 2024-25)
Source: RBI district-level remittance estimates / KNOMAD
- 32%** Share of Gorakhpur district's working-age men currently in (or with recent GCC work history) the GCC labour corridor
Source: eMigrate cumulative data + field estimates
- 11.2%** Annualised growth in UP-Bihar combined GCC emigration 2020-2025, fastest of any major Indian state cluster
Source: eMigrate trend analysis
- 78%** Share of UP-Bihar GCC emigration concentrated in skilled and semi-skilled trades (vs 41% in 2014)
Source: eMigrate occupation tags
- 24** Median years of age at first GCC deployment for UP-Bihar workers (vs 33 for Kerala in 2014)
Source: Mahad Manpower placement audit
- \$4,800** Average annual remittance per migrant from a UP-Bihar household to source village (2024-25)
Source: RBI remittance receipts

How UP-Bihar Replaced Kerala as India's GCC Manpower Heartland

In 1995, Kerala accounted for over a quarter of all Indian emigration to the GCC. By 2025, Kerala's share had fallen to 7%, while Uttar Pradesh and Bihar combined had risen to 46%. This is one of the

most consequential demographic shifts in Indian labour migration history. Three forces explain it. First, Kerala's economic transformation: rising domestic wages (the Kerala minimum wage for skilled construction now exceeds USD 18/day, roughly 2x the UP-Bihar baseline), an aging worker population, and the migration of Kerala's younger generation to the West (US, UK, Australia) for white-collar opportunities all pulled Keralite labour out of the GCC blue-collar segment. Second, UP-Bihar's wage corridor pressure: with rural construction wages of just USD 4-7/day and limited industrial employment, the GCC corridor offers a 4-6x wage uplift that remains genuinely transformative for household economics. Third, network effects: as more UP-Bihar villages developed migration chains, the cost of follow-on migration fell, established workers refer cousins and neighbours into recruitment networks, reducing search costs and risk for first-time migrants.

The Gorakhpur Phenomenon

Gorakhpur district in Eastern UP is now the single largest GCC source district in India, with 12,400 emigration clearances in 2025, more than the entire state of Andhra Pradesh. The district's 4.5 million population has roughly 32% of working-age men currently in the GCC corridor or with recent GCC work history. The economic geography is striking: villages 40 minutes outside Gorakhpur city show satellite-visible signs of remittance investment (newly built 2-3 storey concrete houses, paved village roads, scooter ownership rates rivalling tier-2 cities) that contrast sharply with non-migration villages just 30 km away. Gorakhpur's trade specialisation is mason-heavy (38% of district outflow goes to mason and shuttering carpenter trades), reflecting both the district's historical brick-kiln craft tradition and the dense network of CIDC-affiliated training centres that have established mason certification pipelines specifically targeted at GCC demand. The district has 23 NSDC-affiliated skill training centres and an active passport office that processes ECR-category passports at over 200/day during peak season.

Bihar's Trio: Siwan, Gopalganj, Saran

Three contiguous districts in North Bihar, Siwan, Gopalganj, and Saran (Chhapra), collectively form what is arguably India's most concentrated GCC-bound labour belt. Siwan alone sends 9,600 workers annually, with 35% specialising in steel-fixer trades (a specialisation that traces back to the district's informal apprenticeship networks with construction contractors in Patna and Kolkata going back four decades). Gopalganj, immediately west of Siwan, sends 8,200 workers with strong mason concentration. Saran (whose district headquarters is Chhapra) sends 6,800 workers, with plumber specialisation that has emerged over the past 15 years from a network of three private training schools. The cultural and linguistic homogeneity across these three districts, Bhojpuri-speaking, kinship-network-driven, with shared remittance routes through district capital banks, has made them the single most efficient labour catchment for Saudi-bound and Qatar-bound recruitment in India. Mahad Manpower's field data shows that recruitment cycle times within these three districts are 18-24% shorter than the all-India average, driven by network effects in candidate identification and the maturity of district-level documentation infrastructure.

Trade Specialisation: Why District Matters

A defining feature of the UP-Bihar corridor is district-level trade specialisation that does not exist in other Indian source clusters. Gorakhpur is mason-dominant (38% of outflow). Azamgarh is carpenter-dominant (31%). Siwan is steel-fixer-dominant (35%). Gopalganj is mason-dominant (33%). Basti is driver-dominant (27%). Saran is plumber-dominant (22%). Bhojpur is painter-dominant (24%). This specialisation reflects three factors. First, historical craft inheritance: districts with brick-kiln

traditions produce masons; districts with carpentry traditions produce shuttering carpenters; districts on major highways produce drivers. Second, training infrastructure: NSDC-affiliated centres in each district tend to specialise in one or two trades, reinforcing existing specialisation. Third, network referral patterns: when a village has 50 men working as steel-fixers in Saudi Arabia, the next 50 entrants from that village are overwhelmingly likely to also become steel-fixers, given the network referral and on-job-training advantages. For employers, this means recruitment partner choice has a significant influence on the trade mix achievable from any given mobilisation cycle.

Remittance: The \$10 Billion Annual Inflow

UP and Bihar combined receive an estimated USD 10.3 billion in GCC-sourced remittance flows annually (FY 2024-25), based on RBI district-level inflow estimates triangulated against KNOMAD bilateral matrices. Within this, UP receives roughly USD 6.2B and Bihar USD 4.1B. Per-migrant average remittance is USD 4,800-5,800 annually depending on district (higher in Bihar reflecting the steel-fixer / carpenter wage premium). The household-level economic impact is profound. In a typical Gorakhpur or Siwan migration household, remittance constitutes 65-85% of total household income during the migrant's GCC tenure (typically a 4-6 year cycle with 2-month annual leave returns). The remittance is overwhelmingly directed toward three uses: (1) household consumption and education for children, (2) construction or extension of the family home, and (3) investment in agricultural land, small livestock, or village-level retail trade. The investment-direction third tier has emerged most strongly over the past decade, earlier remittance generations were almost entirely consumption-driven; current migrants increasingly invest in productive assets that generate income after their GCC return.

Demographic and Social Effects on Source Villages

The GCC migration corridor has measurably reshaped UP-Bihar source villages. Three observable patterns. First, the "village without men" demographic: in peak source villages (typical Gorakhpur or Siwan rural blocks), 40-55% of working-age men are absent at any given time, leaving women, children, and elderly residents as the on-ground population. This has driven changes in household decision-making (women hold more financial agency than they did a generation ago in these villages), agricultural patterns (lower labour-intensity crops have spread), and social structures. Second, education investment: GCC remittance households invest 3-4x more in children's education than non-migration households, with measurable effects on local literacy rates and tertiary enrolment. Third, social and political effects: GCC return migrants have emerged as a distinct socio-economic class in source districts, often becoming village panchayat leaders, small business owners, and increasingly participants in local politics. The cumulative effect: source districts in 2025 are demographically, economically, and socially distinct from comparable non-migration districts in the same region.

Implications for GCC Employers

For GCC employers and contractors planning 2026-2028 manpower strategy, the UP-Bihar concentration has both advantages and risks. Advantages: deep, structurally-trained labour supply with mature certification pipelines; well-organised district-level recruitment infrastructure with relatively fast cycle times; cultural and linguistic homogeneity that makes worker management at scale operationally easier; and remittance dependency that supports high retention rates (workers from UP-Bihar households with active home-construction projects are materially less likely to terminate contracts early). Risks: monsoon-cycle dispatch volatility (June-August dispatch volumes drop 30-40% in these districts as agricultural priorities pull workers back to villages); harvest-season returns

(October-November sees a similar 25-35% dispatch slowdown); and election-period disruption (UP and Bihar state elections trigger dispatch slowdowns lasting 4-8 weeks). The strategic implication: a 60/30/10 source-state mix (UP-Bihar / TN-Kerala-Rajasthan / Other) materially smooths quarterly mobilisation while retaining the cost and quality advantages of UP-Bihar concentration.

Policy and Regulatory Environment

The Indian government's policy posture toward UP-Bihar GCC migration has shifted measurably over the past five years. Three regulatory developments. First, NSDC has materially expanded sector skill council coverage in both states, UP now has 38 CIDC-affiliated training centres (up from 14 in 2018) and Bihar has 22 (up from 6). The central government's Skill India initiative has explicitly prioritised GCC-bound trade certification as a national policy goal. Second, the eMigrate platform has integrated district-level monitoring that allows MEA to track recruitment activity at sub-state granularity, enabling targeted enforcement against unscrupulous local recruiters. Third, the Pre-Departure Orientation Training (PDOT) network has been expanded specifically in high-volume UP-Bihar districts, with new centres opened in Gorakhpur, Siwan, and Patna. State-level policy in UP has been generally supportive (the Yogi Adityanath government has highlighted GCC remittance as an economic asset), while Bihar has been more episodic in policy attention but generally permissive.

The 2026-2030 Forecast

Three forecast scenarios for the UP-Bihar corridor through 2030. Base case (60% probability): combined annual emigration grows from 180K (2025) to 235K (2030), with the corridor share of total Indian GCC emigration rising from 46% to 51%. Trade specialisation continues to deepen. Per-migrant remittance reaches USD 6,200-6,800 annually as wage growth compounds. Cumulative remittance into UP-Bihar households 2026-2030 reaches USD 62B. Bull case (25% probability): NEOM Phase-1 acceleration combined with 2034 World Cup peak demand absorbs every additional unit of UP-Bihar supply, pushing combined annual emigration to 280K+ by 2029, corridor share to 54%. Bear case (15% probability): GCC fiscal tightening combined with potential UP-Bihar wage convergence (driven by domestic infrastructure boom) softens the corridor, combined annual emigration stays in the 165K-185K range through 2030. In all scenarios, the structural concentration of source supply in this corridor will remain, Kerala is unlikely to reverse its decline, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan will continue as second-tier specialists, and no new high-volume source state cluster is visible in the data.

Caveats and Data Limitations

Three caveats matter for interpreting this report. First, district-level eMigrate data is published with a 6-9 month lag and is occasionally subject to subsequent revision; the 2025 numbers in this report should be considered provisional and may shift by 2-4% on subsequent eMigrate reconciliation. Second, our trade-specialisation percentages are calculated from Mahad Manpower's placement audit (n=4,242, of which approximately 2,150 placements are from UP-Bihar source districts) cross-referenced against eMigrate occupation tags. Smaller districts with fewer than 200 placements in our audit have wider uncertainty bands on trade specialisation. Third, the remittance estimates at district level are necessarily approximate, RBI publishes state-level remittance receipts but not district-level direct data; our district-level estimates are calculated from migrant-stock-weighted state-level totals and may have +/-15% uncertainty bands at the district level. The aggregate UP and Bihar state-level remittance numbers are more reliable, with +/-5% uncertainty bands. Data cut-off: 28 April 2026.

"When I look at the recruitment landscape in 2025, I see two countries inside India. One is Kerala, where the GCC corridor is structurally winding down because Kerala's economy has moved past it. The other is Eastern Uttar Pradesh and North-Central Bihar, where the corridor is still actively transforming village-level economics in real time. Districts like Gorakhpur and Siwan are not just labour exporters anymore, they are skill exporters, with formal certification pipelines that did not exist a decade ago. The next ten years of Indian recruitment to the Gulf will be written from these districts, and the contractors who build durable relationships with this catchment will have structural cost and quality advantages."

Obaidur Rahman, Mahad Manpower

UP-Bihar Top 7 Source Districts, Profile Snapshot 2025

District	State	2025 Clearanc...	Top Trade	Top GCC Desti...	Avg Remittanc...
Gorakhpur	Uttar Pradesh	12,400	Mason	Saudi Arabia	\$5,100
Azamgarh	Uttar Pradesh	10,800	Carpenter	Saudi Arabia	\$5,400
Siwan	Bihar	9,600	Steel-fixer	Saudi Arabia ...	\$5,800
Gopalganj	Bihar	8,200	Mason	Saudi Arabia	\$4,900
Basti	Uttar Pradesh	7,500	Driver	UAE / Saudi	\$5,200
Saran (Chhapr...	Bihar	6,800	Plumber	UAE / Qatar	\$5,500
Bhojpur	Bihar	5,300	Painter	UAE	\$4,400

District-level data is from eMigrate disaggregated breakdowns and Mahad Manpower placement records (2025). Remittance estimates are calculated from RBI district-level inflow data divided by active migrant headcount.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Which Indian district sends the most workers to the GCC?

A. Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh is the single largest GCC source district in India, with approximately 12,400 emigration clearances in 2025, more than the entire state of Andhra Pradesh. Approximately 32% of Gorakhpur's working-age men are currently in (or have recent work history in) the GCC labour corridor.

Q. Why did Kerala's share of GCC migration decline?

A. Kerala's share fell from over 25% (mid-1990s) to just 7% in 2025 due to three factors: (1) rising domestic wages making the GCC wage uplift less compelling; (2) an aging Kerala worker population; (3) Kerala's younger generation migrating to Western markets (US, UK, Australia) for white-collar opportunities rather than GCC blue-collar work.

Q. How much do UP and Bihar receive in GCC remittances annually?

A. UP and Bihar combined receive an estimated USD 10.3 billion in GCC-sourced remittances annually (FY 2024-25). UP receives approximately USD 6.2B and Bihar USD 4.1B, with average per-migrant remittance of USD 4,800-5,800 per year depending on source district and trade specialisation.

Q. Which trades do specific UP-Bihar districts specialise in?

A. Gorakhpur is mason-dominant (38% of district outflow). Azamgarh: carpenter (31%). Siwan: steel-fixer (35%). Gopalganj: mason (33%). Basti: driver (27%). Saran: plumber (22%). Bhojpur: painter (24%). The specialisation reflects historical craft inheritance, training infrastructure, and network referral patterns.

Q. What are the demographic effects on source villages?

A. Peak source villages typically have 40-55% of working-age men absent at any time, leaving women, children, and elderly as the on-ground population. This has driven measurable changes in household

decision-making (greater female financial agency), agricultural patterns (lower labour-intensity crops), and education investment (3-4x higher per-child education spending in remittance households).

Q. Are there seasonal patterns in UP-Bihar GCC dispatch volumes?

A. Yes. June-August (monsoon and agricultural priorities) sees 30-40% lower dispatch volumes from UP-Bihar districts. October-November (harvest season) sees a 25-35% slowdown. State election periods (UP and Bihar) trigger 4-8 week dispatch slowdowns. These seasonal patterns are why the recommended source-state mix is 60/30/10 rather than UP-Bihar concentrated.

Q. How will UP-Bihar GCC migration evolve through 2030?

A. In our base-case forecast (60% probability), combined annual emigration grows from 180K (2025) to 235K (2030), with corridor share rising from 46% to 51%. Cumulative remittance 2026-2030 is projected at USD 62B. Trade specialisation continues to deepen, with skilled trades exceeding 80% of outflow by 2030.

Q. Can this corridor analysis be cited in articles or research?

A. Yes. This research is published under the Creative Commons CC-BY 4.0 license. You may freely cite, quote, and embed the data in articles, blog posts, academic papers, and corporate research provided you link back to the original report at mahadmanpowers.co.in/research/.

Methodology

This corridor analysis combines four data layers. (1) eMigrate state-and-district disaggregated emigration clearance data for 2014-2025, sourced through the Protector General of Emigrants public releases and Right-to-Information requests where district-level granularity required. (2) RBI remittance receipt data at state level, allocated to district level using migrant-stock-weighted apportionment. (3) Mahad Manpower's anonymised placement audit (n=4,242 total, of which ~2,150 placements are from UP-Bihar source districts) for trade-specialisation, salary, and cycle-time data at district level. (4) Qualitative field reporting from Mahad Manpower's recruitment teams active in Gorakhpur, Azamgarh, Siwan, Gopalganj, Basti, Saran, and Bhojpur, including primary observations of village-level economic indicators. District-level numbers below 5,000 annual placements have wider uncertainty bands than the headline numbers suggest, readers should treat trade-specialisation percentages for smaller districts as directional. Forecasts are scenario-based with explicit probability weightings and incorporate state-level economic and policy variables. Data cut-off: 28 April 2026.

Sources

- * eMigrate / Protector General of Emigrants, district-level data <https://emigrate.gov.in/>
- * Reserve Bank of India, remittance receipt statistics <https://www.rbi.org.in/>
- * World Bank KNOMAD bilateral remittance matrices <https://www.knomad.org/data/remittances>
- * NSDC sector skill council district coverage data <https://www.nsdcindia.org/>
- * Ministry of External Affairs (India) Annual Reports <https://www.mea.gov.in/annual-reports.htm>
- * Mahad Manpower placement audit (UP-Bihar subset, n=2,150) <https://www.mahadmanpowers.co.in/>
- * Government of Uttar Pradesh, Department of Labour <https://uplabour.gov.in/>
- * Government of Bihar, Department of Labour Resources <https://www.labour.bih.nic.in/>

How to cite this report

Mahad Manpower Research. (2026). Uttar Pradesh & Bihar to GCC Migration Corridor, District-Level Analysis 2026. Retrieved from <https://www.mahadmanpowers.co.in/research/uttar-pradesh-bihar-migration-corridor-analysis/>

Licensed under Creative Commons CC-BY 4.0. You may freely cite, quote, and reuse this report's data and findings provided you link back to the source URL above.