

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-2279
ANSWERED ON- 15/12/2023

LEGAL HELPING TEAMS AT INDIAN EMBASSIES

2279. SHRI M. BADRUDDIN AJMAL

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :-

(a) whether Indian Government has any proposal to provide legal helping teams at Indian embassies in foreign countries to extend helping hand to Indian nationals cheated by agents and cruelty and injustice by sponsors etc. as a large number of poor Indians go abroad for earning livelihood face lots of hardship in foreign countries;

(b) if so, the details thereof along with number of such cases reported to embassies during the last three years and the current year; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN)

(a to c) Indian Missions and Posts assist in providing legal aid wherever required by Indian nationals including those cheated by agents and those facing physical or mental harassment or injustice by sponsors etc. Indian Missions/Posts also extends all possible consular assistance to Indians imprisoned abroad. A local panel of lawyers is maintained by all such Indian Missions/Posts where Indian community exists in sizeable numbers. Indian Missions/Posts regularly organize Open Houses and Consular Camps to get the feedback from the Indian workers abroad and address their grievances. As soon as the information about the detention/arrest of an Indian national is received by an Indian Mission/Post, it immediately gets in touch with the local Foreign Office and other concerned local authorities to get consular access to the detained/arrested Indian national to ascertain the facts of the case, confirm his or her Indian nationality and ensure his or her welfare. No fee is charged from any Indian prisoner for extending facilities by the Indian Embassy concerned. The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) is set up in Indian Missions & Posts abroad for assisting overseas Indian nationals in distress situations on a means tested basis in deserving cases. The support extended under ICWF includes financial assistance to Indian prisoners for legal aid as well as travel documents / air tickets during repatriation.

The issue of release and repatriation of Indian nationals in foreign prisons is regularly pursued by Indian Missions and Posts abroad with the local authorities concerned. The Government also follows up such issues during consular and other consultations with other countries. In addition, the Government, through its Missions/Posts abroad and during high level visits, also takes up and pursues grant of amnesty/commutation of sentences of Indian prisoners in foreign countries. India has also entered into prisoner transfer treaties with many nations that allow a person convicted of a crime to be transferred to his or her home country to serve the prison sentence.

As per data available with Indian Missions/Posts in GCC countries, where majority of labour related issues are encountered, year-wise break up of labour complaints received (including those where legal assistance was provided) during the last three years is given below:

Country	Year wise number of labour complaints received		
	2021	2022	2023 (till November)
Bahrain	355	638	628
Kuwait	4339	5660	7303
Oman	830	1299	1824
Qatar	1732	1690	1373
Saudi Arabia	1604	2614	2585
United Arab Emirates	1587	1448	1253

During the period from 2014 to September, 2023, an amount of INR 626 crores of ICWF fund has been utilized for assisting 3,42,543 Indians in distress in foreign countries. Since the year 2014 till September, 2023, legal assistance by Indian Missions/Posts abroad was extended to 3321 Indian nationals, boarding & lodging assistance was provided to 1,70,402 Indian nationals, Emergency medical care provided to 10,515 distressed Indian nationals, air passage to 37,459 stranded Indians, and 3,461 mortal remains of Indian nationals were airlifted.
