

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-68
ANSWERED ON- 02/02/2024**

PRO BONO LEGAL ASSISTANCE

68. SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH

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

(a) whether the Government has any proposal to provide pro-bono legal assistance at Indian embassies, consulates and high-commissions in foreign countries to extend help to Indian nationals who are cheated by agents and reported by having to endure cruelty and injustice by sponsors; and;

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

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN)**

(a) Indian Missions and Posts assist in providing legal assistance 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 extend all possible consular assistance to Indians imprisoned abroad. A local panel of lawyers is also maintained by all such Indian Missions/Posts where Indian community exists in sizeable numbers. Indian Missions/Posts regularly organize Open Houses and Consular Camps in remote areas to get the feedback from the Indian workers abroad and address their grievances. 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 for legal aid as well as travel documents/air tickets during repatriation.

(b) 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.
