

Setting up of National Senior Citizen Fund

2381. SHRI KARTAR SINGH DUGGAL: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the welfare measures pursued by Government for seven per cent elderly Indian citizens;

(b) whether there are any Government-run old-age homes in the country and if so, whether these are adequate for 75 million senior citizens; and

(c) whether there is any plan to set up a National Senior Citizen Fund for amelioration of the lot of the old age people?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) For the Welfare of the senior citizens financial assistance as grant-in-aid is given through various programmes/schemes by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment namely:—

- (i) An Integrated Programme for Older Persons—Under this scheme the Government of India, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment provides grant-in-aid/financial assistance to Non-Governmental Organisations for establishment and maintenance of Old Age Homes, Day Care Centres, Mobile Medicare Units and Non- Institutional Service Centres.
- (ii) Scheme of Assistance to Panchayati Raj Institutions/ Voluntary Organisation/Self help Groups for Construction of Old Age Homes/ Multi Service Centres for Older Persons. Under this scheme the grant-in-aid is provided to eligible organizations for construction of Old Age Home and Multi services centres for older persons.

Under the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), a national Old Age Pension Scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development since 15th August, 1995. This is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under which 100% financial assistance is provided to State Governments for social security in case of old age. According to the revised guidelines, destitute older persons of 65 years or above are eligible for an old age pension of Rs. 75/- per month. The Central Government allocates funds to State Governments for disbursement of the pension.

Apart from the above financial assistance there are following welfare schemes by the Government for the older persons:—

- (i) Government have recently approved a scheme called "ANNAPURNA Scheme" under which 10 Kgs of food grains would be provided to such destitute elderly every month who are not in receipt of old age pension scheme of Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment.
- (ii) On the request of this Ministry, Chief Justice of India advised Chief Justices of all High Courts in the Country to ensure expeditious disposal of Court Cases involving Older Persons.
- (iii) Union Health Ministry has issued instructions to all the State Governments/UT Administrations for provision of separate queues for older persons in hospitals at all stages.
- (iv) At the initiative and with the financial assistance of this Ministry, a Telephone helpline for older persons has been started by an NGO called Agewell Foundation. This helpline is functional from April, 1999.
- (v) The Department of Telecommunications has already announced the Government decision to give telephone connections to senior citizens aged 65 years and above on priority.
- (vi) National Institute of Social Defence has started a 3 months course for home care of elderly disabled persons in August, 1999. This course will help to prepare a cadre of Geriatric Animators to render comprehensive care to the aged in their homes and in the community.
- (vii) Aadhar has been set up to function as Secretariat of National Council for Older Persons (NCOP). The major activities of Aadhar include receiving and taking follow up action on representations, complaints and grievances of older persons.

(b) This Ministry is supporting about 331 old age homes in the country. Apart from this state, local governments and non-governmental organizations are also supporting homes for the elderly people. Some are funded through private initiatives also. Most of the elderly persons have family support and income and it is only those who are without such support and are in indigent circumstances who avail or need facilities in these homes.

(c) No, Sir.