

safeguarded by the legal system in their respective countries of residence. Whenever necessary, the Government of India intervenes to look after the interests of its citizens through the Indian Diplomatic Missions and Posts abroad.

NRI welfare fund scheme

4531. SHRI K.N. BALAGOPAL: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has introduced NRI welfare fund scheme;
- (b) if so, the major schemes and benefits available to NRIs;
- (c) the number of NRIs who joined the scheme; and
- (d) the amount of money distributed till date as benefits?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (d) The Ministry has set up the 'Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF)' in the Indian Missions in 42 countries which have more than 50,000 Overseas Indian populations, to provide on-site welfare for the Overseas Indian Citizens who are in distress in those countries. The Fund is aimed at providing the following services on a means tested basis:—

- (i) Boarding and lodging for distressed overseas Indian workers in Household/domestic sectors and unskilled labourers;
- (ii) Extending emergency medical care to the overseas Indians in need;
- (iii) Providing air passage to stranded overseas Indians in need;
- (iv) Providing initial legal assistance to the overseas Indians in deserving cases.
- (v) Expenditure on incidentals and for airlifting the mortal remains to India or local cremation/burial of the deceased overseas Indian in such cases where a sponsor is unable or unwilling to do so as per the contract and the family is unable to meet the cost.

The Fund is administered by the respective Heads of Missions and financial assistance given by the Missions, in the most deserving cases. The ICWF is funded through budgetary support from the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, funds raised by the Indian Missions by levying a service charge on Consular services and through Voluntary contributions from the Indian community. The Ministry had released an amount of Rs. 71.75 lakhs to the Indian Missions during 2009-10.

Cheating of Indian girls by bridegrooms

4532. SHRI AVINASH RAI KHANNA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware of the fact that the NRI bridegrooms used to cheat the Indian girls to whom they marry and did not take them to their respective countries;