

Prasar Bharati has informed that they carry out the public broadcasting services in a fair and objective manner and they do not discriminate on the basis of ideologies. The Government is of the view that Prasar Bharati is not overshadowed by the ideological apartheid or hate.

(b) Prasar Bharati has informed that no journalist has been decommissioned or debarred by Doordarshan to curtail their independence. Prasar Bharati has further informed that the journalists are invited as per the requirements, without any discrimination.

#### **Funds to meet expenses of repatriation**

983. SHRI C.P. NARAYANAN: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government collects an amount from every Indian emigre in order to meet expenses of their repatriation, if found necessary;

(b) whether in the past such funds were not used for such purposes and over the years it has swelled to hundreds of crores of rupees; and

(c) whether Government will see to it that such funds are used to meet expenses of bringing back emigres in distress such as those now trapped in Iraq or those found in helpless situations in Gulf countries and elsewhere?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) The Government has set up the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) at the Mission level for welfare of Overseas Indian. The fund is raised by the Indian Missions by levying additional charge on consular services. In addition, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs provides budgetary support for setting up ICWF to the tune of ₹ 5 lakh per year. This contribution is initially for a period of three years or till the period fund become self sustaining, whichever is earlier.

The Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) is aimed at providing the following services on a “means tested basis” in the most deserving cases:

- (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 Indians in such cases where the sponsor is unable or unwilling to do so as per the contract and the family is unable to meet the cost;
  - (vi) Providing the payment of penalties in respect of Indian nationals for illegal stay in the host country where *prima facie* the worker is not at fault;
  - (vii) Providing the payment of small fines/ penalties for the release of Indian nationals in jail/detention centre.
- (c) The funds available under ICWF are being used to meet expenses of bringing back Overseas Indians in distress such as those now stranded in Iraq or those in other countries including Gulf countries.

#### **Steps to improve relationship with overseas Indians**

†984. SHRI SATYANARAYAN JATIYA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state The details of the efforts made so far to make relationship of overseas Indians with India more cordial and mutual and the outline of planning for its further expansion and its time-frame?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): The details of the efforts made so far to make relationship of overseas Indians with India more cordial and mutual are given in Statement:

#### ***Statement***

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*Various schemes for Overseas Indians comprising Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) and Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), Overseas Citizenship of India matters, Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards, Scholarships to NRI/PIO students in India and new initiatives to promote interaction and cordial relationship of overseas Indians with India in tourism, media, youth affairs, education, culture among other areas*

#### **(i) Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) :**

To connect India to its vast overseas diaspora and bring their knowledge, expertise and skills on a common platform, the PBD Convention - the flagship event of MOIA is organized from 7th-9th January every year since 2003.

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