

(a) whether an Illness Assistance Fund has been set up at National and State level to help the poor undergoing expensive medical treatment; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the guidelines issued as to the eligibility of patients to receive assistance from this fund and the authority to which application has to be sent ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) and (b) National Illness Assistance Fund has been set up vide Ministry of Health & Family Welfare Resolution dated 13.1.97, which has been published in the Gazette of India (Extraordinary) (Part I-Section I) (No. 9).

It has been provided in this Scheme that every State/U.T. (with Legislature) may set up an Illness Assistance Fund, which shall be a registered Society. The donation received by this Society from State Govt./UT Adm. will be supplemented by a grant-in-aid from Central Govt./UT subject to a maximum of Rs. 5 crores for States which have a larger proportion of population living below poverty line and Rs. 2 crores for other States/UTs. The poverty line shall be as defined by Planning Commission. The Fund could also be subscribed by individuals, corporate bodies and other national/international philanthropic organisations. The contributions received by this Fund would be exempt from payment of Income Tax under Section 80 (G) of Income Tax Act. The accounts of the Society would be audited by A.G. of the State/U.T. every year.

This Fund would release financial assistance to patients, below poverty line, living in India, suffering from life-threatening diseases for undergoing medical treatment at any of the superspeciality Hospitals/Institutes or other Govt./private Hospitals, participating in the Scheme. The assistance will be in the form of a one-time grant which will be released to the Medical Superintendent of the Hospital, in which the treatment has been received.

A provision of Rs. 25 crores has been made in the budget grant of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare during 1996-97 for release of grant-in-aid to States.

It has also been decided that a National Illness Assistance Fund should be set up with an initial donation from Ministry of Health & Family Welfare of Rs. 5 crores. This Fund could also be subscribed by individuals, corporate bodies and non-corporate bodies. The contributions made to this Fund will also be exempt from payment of Income Tax under Section 80 (G) of Income Tax Act. The Management Committee of NIAF will be chaired by Union Health Minister. The NIAF will be a registered Society and its accounts will be subject to audit by C&AG every year.

Wherever the quantum of financial assistance to a poor patient is less than Rs. 1.5 lakhs, the release will be done by the Fund at the State/U.T. level and if the quantum of assistance is in excess of Rs. 1.5 lakhs, in an individual case, the case will be recommended to NIAF at the Centre.

NIAF will also decide about the budget outlay for grant of similar assistance to be released to such population living in UTs without Legislature.

Applications for necessary financial assistance under this Scheme can be addressed to the Illness Assistance Fund of the respective State/UT or NIAF.

[Translation]

Post Lying Vacant

168. SHRI N.J. RATHWA : Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether ad-hoc and permanent appointments against various posts, especially of Senior Resident Doctors (ophthalmology in All India Institute of Medical Science and Rajender Prasad Eye Centre, New Delhi), have not been filled up in accordance with the reservations during the last three years and general category candidates have been appointed against the reserved posts;

(b) whether the Government are aware that such Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes candidates, who were appointed against various posts on the basis of open merit have been accommodated against reserved posts;

(c) if so, the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government so far to fill up the reserved posts in accordance with reservation and observing the reservation rules strictly;

(d) whether any complaint has been received in this regard till date; and

(e) if so, the action taken by the Government in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) to (c) No regular appointments to the post of Senior Resident Doctors are being made in the Institute from July/September, 1994 onwards due to stay orders of the High Court of Delhi on reservation issue. On receipt of a clarification from the Court on 19.8.96, the Institute was directed to make recruitment to the post of Senior Resident Doctors on ad-hoc basis with reservation as provided for in the instructions on the subject.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) The comments of the Institute have been called for.

Iodine Deficiency

169. SHRI BUDHSEN PATEL : Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) the percentage of population in the country suffering from iodine deficiency;

(b) the areas in the country where goitre disease is contacted locally;

(c) whether any deaths have occurred due to goitre, if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether there is proposal for introducing iodisation process of all kinds of common (consumable) salts, if so, the main features of this programme; and

(e) the steps being taken to eradicate goitre throughout the country ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) and (b) It is estimated that more than 200 million people are at the risk of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) in the country. Surveys conducted in 275 districts of 29 States and Union Territories have shown that the prevalence of Goitre and other Iodine Deficiency Disorders is more than 10% in 235 districts.

(c) No such death has been reported.

(d) and (e) National Iodine Deficiency Disorders Control Programme envisages universal iodisation of edible salt in the country. The Programme strategy includes IDD surveys, supply of iodised salt, monitoring of iodine content of salt and health education to increase public awareness. Sale of non-iodised salt has also been banned completely in all States/UTs except in Kerala, Goa and Pondicherry and partially in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

[English]

Passport Offices

170. SHRI A.G.S. RAM BABU : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of Passport Offices in Tamil Nadu;

(b) the average number of applications processed every month;

(c) whether there is any delay in the issue of passport;

(d) if so, whether there is any proposal to open passport office in Madurai;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) There are two Passport Offices in Chennai & Tiruchirappalli.

(b) The average number of applications processed every month from each Passport Office is as follows :

Tiruchirappalli	15,980
Chennai	11,180

(c) R.P.O., Chennai & P.O., Tiruchirappalli, take approximately 6-8 weeks to issue a passport.

(d) to (f) There is no proposal presently under consideration of the Government to open any more Passport Offices as the existing offices are able to cater to the needs of the passport applicants from the state and issue a passport within a reasonable period of time.

Family Welfare Projects in Rajasthan

171. SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE : Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) the details of Family Welfare Projects under implementation in Rajasthan;

(b) the efforts made by the Government for effective implementation of these projects; and

(c) the achievement made during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) and (b) Two Family Welfare area projects are under implementation in the State of Rajasthan, one with the assistance of United Nations Population Fund in 13 districts from 1st March, 1989 to 31st March, 1997 at a total cost of Rs. 34.85 Cr. and the second Ninth India Population Project at a total cost of Rs. 108.57 Cr. with World Bank assistance in 10 backward districts for a period of 7 years w.e.f. 16th June, 1994. The main objectives of the projects are to reduce maternal and child mortality, morbidity and birth rates. The projects are implemented by the State Government and progress in implementation is reviewed by the Government of India from time to time.

(c) Under the UNFPA project 418 sub-centres, 19 primary health centres, 28 LHV quarters, 10 ANM training schools, 3 LHV training schools and 1 building for state health education extension information communication have been constructed. So far, 7,000 dai's and 5,092 multipurpose health workers (male and female) have been trained.

Under the IPP-IX project 146 sub-centres have been constructed, 40 operation theatres and delivery rooms at first referral units have also been provided. So far, 2156 health functionaries have been trained under the project.

Issuance of Visa

172. SHRI A. SAMPATH : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it has come to the notice of the Government that certain countries are not issuing work permits and visas to Indian citizens on grounds of religion;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) No specific instances of refusal of work permits and visas to Indian citizens by countries on grounds of religion have come to the notice of Government.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.