

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
LAW AND JUSTICE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:573

ANSWERED ON:03.12.2004

FREE LEGAL AID TO POOR

Adhalrao Patil Shri Shivaji;Rawale Shri Mohan

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government are providing financial aid to the State Governments for providing free legal aid to poor people;
- (b) if so, the funds provided so far to each State during the last three years;
- (c) whether all the State Governments have fully utilized the said fund properly;
- (d) if not, the reasons therefor;
- (e) the number of poor people in each State to whom free legal aid has been provided during the above period; and
- (f) the steps being taken by the Government to provide free legal aid to poor and weaker sections of society in an effective manner?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI K. VENKATAPATHY)

(a)&(b) In terms of sub-sections (c) and (j) of Section 4 of the Legal Services Authorities Act 1987, the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) allocates funds on financial year basis to the State Legal Services Authorities including Supreme Court Legal Services Committee and Non-Governmental Organisations for implementation of Legal Aid Programmes & Schemes framed by NALSA which includes free legal aid to the poor. The allotment of funds is done by this Authority on the basis of the specific requests received from State Legal Services Authorities, and their need and programmes.

A statement showing funds allocated by the NALSA during the last three financial years viz. 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04 is enclosed at Annexure - A.

(C) Yes, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) A Statement showing number of persons provided free legal aid during the last three years is enclosed at Annexure 'B'.

(f) NALSA is monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Legal Aid Schemes and Programmes in the country and is taking appropriate measures for spreading legal literacy and legal awareness amongst the poor and the weaker sections of the society, so as to strengthen the legal aid movement.

Recently, it was resolved in the Annual Meeting of all State Legal Services Authorities to raise the income ceiling in terms of section 12 (h) of the Legal Services Authorities Act 1987 from Rs.25,000/- to 50,000/- per annum in respect of cases before the High Courts and courts subordinates thereto. The annual income limit fixed by the Central Government, for cases before the Supreme Court is also Rs.50,000/-. Pursuant to the implementation of the decision by some of the State Legal Services Authorities, there has been a significant increase in the number of legal aid beneficiaries.