

(i) Regular recruitment rallies are being conducted in the North Eastern States.

(ii) Wide publicity is being given to the recruitment rallies.

(iii) Emphasis is given on organising recruitment rallies in the rural and backward areas with the help of civil administration.

(iv) Following dispensation in educational qualification have been provided for enrolment as Soldier (GD) in the Army:—

(a) From class X to class V to tribals of seven North-Eastern States.

(b) From class X to class VIII for all persons hailing from Sikkim.

Proposal to Start Defence Engineering Academy

†1888. SHRI KRIPAL PARMAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any proposal has been/is being finalised to start Defence Engineering Academy for increasing manpower in Defence Services;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether there is acute shortage of manpower in Army; and

(d) if so, what steps are being taken to encourage the meritorious youth to join Army?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Yes, Sir. There is a shortage of officers to the extent of 28.1%.

(d) An Image Projection Campaign of the Army was launched during 1997-98 with assistance of a professional advertising agency. The campaign has made a positive impact in that the number of

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

eligible youths opting for a career in the Army has increased. On this consideration, the campaign is continuing.

Apart from the above, the Government have approved, in principle, short term, medium and long term measures to tide over the problem of shortage in Army. This includes reduction in training period of officers by six months at Indian Military Academy (IMA) for ex-NDA, Ex-ACC and Direct Entry cadets for a period of two years from January, 2000 to December, 2001 besides constitution of a high level committee to recommend feasible options to make Short Services Commission more attractive.

Lowering of the Cost of Mirage by France

1889. SHRI K. M. SAIFULLAH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether France proposes to lower the cost of Mirage to be sold to India by labour sharing arrangement with India;

(b) if so, the terms and conditions of the sale; and

(c) by when the supply is expected?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) The current negotiations for procurement of 10 additional Mirage 2000 aircraft have not yet been finalised.

Under Utilisation of funds by Army

1890. SHRI K. M. SAIFULLAH:

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH:

DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR:

SHRI K. KALAVENKATA RAO:

DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether over Rs. 800 crores of the Army's Budget for 1999-2000 remained unspent;