

- (c) if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) the steps Government has taken to foil the terrorist attacks?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (d) Government has accorded top priority to strengthening the mechanism ensuring overall coastal and maritime security of the country through increased coastal surveillance by deployment of the assets of both Navy and Coast Guard. The inputs received by intelligence agencies are being shared on daily basis through the Multi-agency Mechanism. Further this intelligence mechanism has been streamlined through the creation of Joint Operation Centres. In order to improve preparedness and seamless integration of various security agencies against such threats, Joint Operational exercises are taking place on regular basis among the Navy, the Coast Guard, the Coastal State Police, Customs and others.

Prevention of poaching off the Andaman Coast

2380. SHRI N. BALAGANGA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether there has been incidents of poaching of sea cucumbers, corals and other valuable marine lives off the Andaman Coast;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the action taken/proposed to be taken by Government to prevent such poaching in the future?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) The Indian Coast Guard patrols Indian Coastline on a regular basis to prevent poaching activities. The patrolling is done by ships, boats and air. While no incident of poaching of sea corals and other valuable marine lives has been reported in the current year, few incidents of poaching/attempt to poach have been reported for sea cucumber off Andaman Coast in the current year.

Vacant post in armed forces

†2381. MISS ANUSUIYA UIKEY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that the number of officers in the army is decreasing continuously;
 - (b) the number of sanctioned and vacant posts;
 - (c) the reasons for vacancies and decreasing number of officers in the army;
 - (d) whether Government is taking any special measure to fill the above said posts;
- and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (e) No discernible decreasing trend in the number of officers in Army has been observed. In Army, sanctioned strength of officers is 47,864 with a shortage of 12,510.

The shortage of officers in the Armed Forces is partly attributable to accretions from time to time, tough selection procedures, difficult service conditions coupled with perceived high degree of risk involved in service career.

Measures have been taken on an ongoing basis to reduce shortages in the officers' cadre. In this regard, a number of steps have been taken to attract the talented youth to join the Armed Forces. All officers including those in Short Service Commission (SSC) are now eligible to hold substantive rank of Captain, Major and Lieutenant Colonel after 2, 6 and 13 years of reckonable service respectively. The tenure of SSC officers has been increased from 10 years to 14 years. A total number of 750 posts of Lt. Colonel have been upgraded to Colonel towards implementation of AV Singh Committee Report (Phase-I). Further, 1896 additional posts in the ranks of Colonel, Brigadier, Major General and Lieutenant General and their equivalents in the other two Services have been upgraded towards implementation of AV Singh Committee Report (Phase-II). The implementation of recommendations of the VI Central Pay Commission with substantial improvement in the pay structure of officers of Armed Forces has made the Services more attractive.

The Armed Forces have also undertaken sustained image projection and publicity campaign to create awareness among the youth on the advantages of taking up a challenging and satisfying career. Awareness campaigns, participation in career fairs and exhibitions, advertisements in print and electronic media, motivational lectures in schools, colleges are also some of the other measures in this direction.

Delay in artillery modernization programme

2382. DR. BHARATKUMAR RAUT: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 100 projects of arms procurement are still stuck amid bureaucratic hurdles and the modernization plans of Army are very slow;

(b) whether the Ministry is not finalizing a long delayed artillery modernization programme of over Rs. 20,000 crore yet; and

(c) what steps Government proposes to take to revamp MoD's land systems acquisitions wing to fast-track inductions within the Army Headquarters?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) Procurement of defence equipment/weapon systems for the Army is done in accordance with the provisions of the Defence Procurement Procedure. Delays occur in some procurement cases due to various