

(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

reasons including insufficient and limited vendor base, non-conformity of the offers to the conditions of the Request for Proposal, field trials, complexities in contract negotiations, limited indigenous capability and long lead time for indigenization etc. To counter systemic and institutional delays, procedures and processes are continuously refined on the basis of experience gained during the procurement process. The Defence Procurement Procedure provides an effective framework for expeditious procurement for modernization of the Army.

**Army officials involved in illegal sale of arms**

2383. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the army has recently admitted that a large number of its officers including Colonels and Lt. Colonels were involved in illegal sale of arms;

(b) if so, whether Government has since ascertained the buyers of such illegal arms from the army personnel;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the steps Government proposes to take to ensure that army officials whether in service or retired are not allowed to sell their weapons?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (d) A case relating to sale of Non Standard Pattern (NSP) weapons by Army Officers and a JCO has come to light. 41 officers, 01 JCO and 04 retired officers were found to have sold the NSP weapons without taking sanction of competent authority. Court of Inquiry held to investigate into the case has identified six arms dealers buying the illegal arms from the army personnel. Suitable remedial measures by way of amendment of SAO I/S/96 and issue of a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure have been taken by Army Headquarters.

**Withdrawal of AFSPA from Imphal**

†2384. SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI:

SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has withdrawn Armed Force Special Power Act (AFSPA) from Imphal, the capital of Manipur;

(b) whether it is also a fact that since the withdrawal of AFSPA, Imphal is being widely used for taking shelter, stockpiling arms etc. by terrorists of North-East;

(c) whether Government is planning to withdraw AFSPA from Jammu and Kashmir too;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.