

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (e) The major indigenous warship building projects of the Navy running behind schedule are Project-15A, Project-17 and Project-28. The cost escalation in these projects has been about 225% for Project-15A, about 260% for Project-17 and about 157% for Project-28.

The major cost escalation has been due to uncertainties associated with the complex warship building process. Project-wise reasons for cost escalations are as follows:

P-15A: The main reasons contributing towards cost escalations are — delay in supply of warship building quality steel by Russia, escalation due to increase in expenditure towards services of Russian Specialists on account of inflation during the build period, impact of Wage revision due from October 2003 and finalization of cost of weapons and sensors.

P-17: The main reasons contributing towards cost escalations are — delay in supply of warship building quality steel by Russia, delay in acquisition of weapon equipment from Russia, and delay in finalization of propulsion equipment in view of complex combined diesel and gas arrangement introduced for the first time in Indian Navy frigate.

P-28: Navy was using D40S/B-quality high tensile strength steel for construction of warships; however, due to high cost of import, indigenously developed DMR 249A steel was decided to be used on P-28 ships. However, there was delay in development of indigenous steel and associated complexities related to development of new weld consumables and welding techniques. The delay in identification of suitable propulsion package to meet stealth requirement of ships and delay in development of indigenous weapons and sensors also resulted in cost escalation.

In case of Project-17, Air Conditioning system procured from M/s York Marine Systems, UK has been functioning satisfactorily on the first two ships. In case of Project-28, it was tendered on competitive basis and the order was placed on M/s York India.

Gender bias in ranking of officers in army

345. SHRIMATI VASANTHI STANLEY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the rank provided to women officers in the Indian Army after having served for 14 years;

(b) whether the male officers of the Indian Army are ranked as Lieutenant Colonel after 13 years of service;

(c) if so, what are the reasons for the different yardsticks in ranking officers according to their gender; and

(d) whether the actions of this nature violate the principles of equality eschewed by the Constitution?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (d) Women are inducted as Short Service Commissioned Officers (SSCOs) in the Indian Army. All officers, including those in Short Service Commission (SSC), are eligible to hold substantive rank of Captain, Major and Lieutenant Colonel after 2, 6 and 13 years of reckonable service, irrespective of gender.

The difference in the period of pre-commission training prevailing earlier for erstwhile Women Special Entry Scheme officers (24 weeks) and Men SSCOs (49 weeks), resulted in differences in the rank attained due to different lengths of reckonable service. However, the duration of pre-commission training for both Women and Men SSCOs (Non-Technical) has been made uniform (49 weeks) from April, 2008 onwards. Accordingly, all SSCOs (both Women and Men), will now have more than 13 years reckonable service thereby enabling them to attain the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Shortfall of officers in Indian Army

346. SHRIMATI VASANTHI STANLEY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total number of men and women serving officers in the Indian Army;

(b) what is the total shortfall in the number of officers at present in the Indian Army;

(c) whether any steps have been taken by Government to address this shortfall and if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether the Army will consider providing Permanent Commission to women officers, keeping in mind the High Court order passed in this regard; and