(b)   whether it is also a fact that they incurred on the contingency staff, which was unauthorized and in violation of the rules of Government, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) Missions have engaged contingency staff from time to time to meet exigencies of official work in accordance with the relevant rules of the Ministry.

(b)   Staff engaged on a contingency basis are paid as per prescribed scales.

Shortage of IFS officers

2772. PROF. M. V. RAJEEV GOWDA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a)   the estimated shortage of Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officers in the Ministry;

(b)   whether the Ministry is recruiting experts International Relations related fields as consultants to reduce work pressure on IFS officers, if so, the details thereof; and

(c)   whether the Ministry has considered tackling this system shortfall of officers by increasing annual batch of IFS officers *vis-a-vis* hiring consultants on contract basis, if so, the details thereof, if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS [GENERAL (RETD.) V. K. SINGH]: (a) to (c) With expansion of India's global engagement and role, Ministry of External Affairs considers optimization of human resource on a priority basis and accordingly adjusts its personnel strength for meeting its needs from time to time. The Ministry has initiated selection of Consultants from the private sector and academia to work as International Relations Experts in the Policy Planning and Research Division with the objective of bringing in identified expertise relevant to the mandate of the Division. Applications have been invited from individuals through open advertisement.

US arms sale to Pakistan

2773. SHRI S. THANGAVELU: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a)   whether it is true that India has taken up the issue of US arms sale to Pakistan with the US Defence Secretary, if so, the details thereof;