

(b) how many out of them are lying vacant since last five years or more along with the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether Government plans to launch a special recruitment drive to fill up such vacant posts for handicapped persons, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (DR. JITENDRA SINGH): (a) and (b) Reservation for Persons with Disabilities is vacancy based.

As per the data received from various Departments/Ministries, attached and Subordinate Offices, Nationalized Banks, Financial Institutions, Central Public Sector Undertakings, there were 14,267 vacancies identified for persons with disabilities. This, *inter-alia*, included backlog vacancies carried forward from earlier years. Out of these 14267 vacancies, 2990 vacancies identified were in respect of Group A or equivalent posts.

(c) Government has issued instructions on 22nd May, 2015 to all concerned to take immediate necessary action for filling up of vacancies for persons with disabilities and to launch a Special Recruitment Drive to fill up those vacancies by February, 2016.

Protection of whistleblowers and witnesses

1203. SHRI AVINASH PANDE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has put in place any mechanism, rules or guidelines to ensure the protection of whistle Blowers and witnesses in sensitive cases involving allegations of corruption against Government officials;

(b) whether Government is aware of any such measures being taken by State Governments to protect whistle Blowers and witnesses to ensure fair trial in judicial proceedings; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (DR. JITENDRA SINGH): (a) to (c) The Government of India *vide* Resolution dated 21.04.2004 on Public Interest Disclosure and Protection of Informers had authorized the Central Vigilance Commission as the Designated Agency to receive written complaints for disclosure on any allegation of corruption or misuse of office and to recommend appropriate action. The Government has now *vide* Resolution dated 14.08.2013 also authorized the Chief Vigilance Officers of the Ministries/ Departments of the Central Government as the Designated Authority to receive

written complaint or disclosure on any allegation of corruption or misuse of office in respect of any employee of that Ministry/Department or any organization falling under their jurisdiction. If the Designated Authority in the Ministries/Departments, either on the application of the complainant, or on the basis of the information gathered, is of the opinion that either the complainant needs protection, the Designated Authority shall take up the matter with the Central Vigilance Commission, for issuing appropriate directions to the concerned authorities.

The Commission, after receipt of such representation(s) from Whistle Blowers about threats to their life, takes up the matter with the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Nodal Agency, to undertake the responsibility of providing security cover to genuine Whistle Blowers. The Home Ministry, in turn, asks individual State Governments to examine the threat and provide security cover, if needed. On the advice of Ministry of Home Affairs, State Governments have appointed Nodal Officers in respective States and details about Nodal Officers nominated by various State Governments has been communicated to the Commission for referring the matters to them.

Increase in RTI activists

1204. SHRI S. THANGAVELU: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indians are prolific users of the Right to Information Act and public authorities are unable to keep them satisfied;

(b) whether it is also true that Indian citizens have filed close to fifty lakh RTIs in a year *i.e.* during 2013-14, but the number of rejections and appeals indicate that public authorities are often failing to give the information that people are asking; and

(c) whether it is also true that a country-wide study on the functioning of the Central Information Commission and State Information Commissions had revealed that the number of RTIs has increased exponentially, and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (DR. JITENDRA SINGH): (a) and (b) The Government has not conducted any study on this aspect. However, Public Information Officer is liable to be penalized if the RTI application filed before him/her is not responded to within the prescribed time limit. There are provisions for first appeal and second appeal in the Right to Information Act, 2005, in case the citizen is not satisfied with the reply of the Public Information Officer.

(c) A study, conducted by RTI Assessment and Advocacy Group (RAAG) and Samya-Centre for Equity Studies (CES), titled 'Peoples' Monitoring of the RTI Regime