

During the last three financial years, India's average defence budget has been about 2.26% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Expenditure on defence is undertaken with a view to keeping the Armed Forces in a state of preparedness to meet any challenges. Necessary funds are made available for defence expenditure taking into account the threat perception and technological changes.

Upgradation of skills of short service officers

884. SHRIMATI SYEDAANWARATAIMUR:

SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) what steps have been taken so far to upgrade the skills of Short Service Officers to prepare them for alternative employment;

(b) how many Short Service Officers have been released from the Army after completing their terms of contract employment, and have been absorbed in gainful employment during the last five years; and

(c) has any study been made to find out difference, if any, in the combat skills of Short Service Officers *vis-a-vis* regular commissioned officers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI M.M. PALLAM RAJU): (a) Upgradation of skills of Officers of the Armed Forces (including Short Service Officers) is a continuous process. A number of job oriented courses relating to IT, Management etc. at premier institutions like IIM are sponsored by Directorate General of Resettlement (DGR) for defence officers.

(b) Short Service Officers who have been released from the Army after their contractual period during the last five years is as follows:

Year	Release after 5 years	Release after extended tenure	Total
2002	34	11	45
2003	32	28	60
2004	40	49	89
2005	65	54	119
2006	82	82	164
Total:	253	224	477

No details concerning post-release employment of officers released after completion of initial contractual period of five years are maintained since only defence service officers of the rank of Colonel or equivalent and above who retire with pension, gratuity or any other benefits are required to obtain prior permission for accepting any commercial employment.

Officers, who have been released during extended tenure after their initial contractual period of five years, were released on assurance provided by the officers that they have suitable civil employment. Hence, the 224 officers who were released in the last five years while in their extended tenure may be deemed as gainfully employed.

(c) While no study has been considered necessary so far, the combat skills of officers in the Army, both Short Service and Regular Commissioned are as per desired standards.

Review of extra pension to gallantry awardees

885. SHRI HARISH RAWAT:

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) does the Government provide any extra pension or allowance to the gallantry award winning officers and soldiers and if so, the details thereof;

(b) how often are such extra pension/allowances to the gallantry awardees reviewed;

(c) has Government taken cognizance of the plight of a retired Lt. Colonel as reported in the media;

(d) whether it is a fact that no action has been taken on the representations made by the said Lt. Colonel in past and if so, the reasons therefor; and

(e) what urgent steps are being taken to address his grievances in particular and those of other awardees?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (e) The Government provides monthly monetary allowances to the gallantry award winning officers and soldiers. The existing rates of the allowances sanctioned for these gallantry awards are as under:—

1.	Param Vir Chakra		Rs. 1500/-
2.	Ashoka Chakra	—	Rs. 1400/-
3.	Maha Vir Chakra		Rs. 1200/-
4.	Kirti Chakra	—	Rs. 1050/-
5.	Vir Chakra		Rs. 850/-
6.	Shaurya Chakra	—	Rs. 750/-
7.	Sena/Nao Sena/Vayu Sena Medal (Gallantry)	—	Rs. 250A

Note: Each Bar to the award will carry the same amount of monetary allowance as admissible to the original award.

The rates of these allowances are revised from time to time. The last such revision was made with effect from 1.2.1999. Monetary allowances were attached with Sena Medal/Nao Sena Medal/Vayu Sena Medal (Gallantry) for the first time with effect from 1.2.1999.

The disposal of the representations/grievances of the gallantry awardees and their families is a continuous process within the Ministry of Defence by coordinating with the concerned authorities for timely redressal of their grievances.

Sharing of classified information through Orkut

886. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL:

SHRI AMAR SINGH:

SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that hundreds of young army officers are sharing information about their military training, posting, cell-phone numbers and even operational details through "Orkut" a social networking site operated by Google;