

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS  
**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2922**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2023

**WOMEN IN DEFENCE SERVICES**

2922. SHRIMATI QUEEN OJA:  
SHRI T.R. BAALU:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of women serving in various Defence forces across the country at present, service-wise;
- (b) whether the women have to face adverse working conditions in Defence postings, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has formulated any rules to deploy them as per their convenience, if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether there is any provision for timely leave for women working in Defence services, if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether the armed forces have yet to fully accept women as equals in their ranks, if so, the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard; and
- (f) the other steps being taken by the Government for the betterment of women soldiers and accommodate more women cadets in the forces?

A N S W E R

MINISTER OF STATE  
IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

(SHRI AJAY BHATT)

(a): Indian Army: The total number of women serving in Indian Army, category-wise is as under:-

Sl No.	Category	Held Strength of Women
(a)	Officers (including Army Medical Corps (AMC)/ Army Dental Corps (ADC) and Military Nursing Service (MNS) officers)	6993
(b)	Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs)	-
(c)	Other Ranks (OR)	100
Total		7,093

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Indian Air Force: At present, women are serving in Officer's cadre only in the Indian Air Force (IAF). The strength of women officers, as on 01.03.2023, in the IAF (excluding Medical and Dental branches) is 1636.

Indian Navy: As on date, women are employed in the Navy in the officer's rank. The strength of women officers in the Indian Navy, as on 09.03.2023, is 748 including Medical and Dental officers.

(b): Employment in Indian Armed Forces is gender neutral. There is no distinction in the deployment and working conditions of male and female soldiers in the arms and services in which they serve. The postings are as per organizational requirements and employment is as per qualifications and service qualitative requirements.

(c): Indian Army: Consequent to grant of Permanent Commission to Women Officers (WOs), a gender neutral Career Progression policy covering employment and promotional aspects was promulgated on 23.11.2021, providing equal opportunities to women officers in the Arms/Services where they are commissioned.

Indian Air Force: Women officers are empowered to tenate key appointments including Commanding Officers in Combat Units of various field units. The rules in this regard are gender neutral and provide them equal opportunities. Their medical fitness and medical conditions are also factored prior to their effective utilization.

Indian Navy: Officers are given opportunities for spouse co-location, re-settlement posting and compassionate grounds posting in a gender neutral manner.

(d): Women are granted Maternity Leave and Child Care Leave etc. in addition to other leave applicable to their male counterparts.

(e) & (f): Indian Army:

Officers: Indian Army is encouraging women to join the force by adopting enabling policies for their inclusion. Recent major initiatives underway are as under:-

(i) Grant of Permanent Commission (PC) to Women Serving Personnel. PC is being granted to Women Officers (WOs) in 11 Arms & Services (in addition to Army Medical Corps, Army Dental Corps and Military Nursing Service) viz. Army Service Corps (ASC), Army Ordnance Corps (AOC), Army Education Corps (AEC), Judge Advocate General Branch (JAG Br), Corps of Engineers (ENGRS), Corps of Signals (SIGS), Corps of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME), Intelligence Corps (Int Corps), Army Air Defence (AAD), Army Aviation, Remount and Veterinary Corps (RVC).

(ii) Women in National Defence Academy (NDA). Armed Forces have opened entry for women candidates in NDA with 19 cadets including 10 for Indian Army joining the academy every six months. First batch of women cadets has started training in NDA with effect from July 2022 and second batch has commenced training with effect from January 2023. The organization is ensuring inclusive measures to carry out all necessary administrative, training and policy changes to enable the same.

(iii) Women in Army Aviation. Indian Army has also opened avenues for Women Officers to serve as pilots in the Corps of Army Aviation since year 2021.

(iv) Women Officers in Remount and Veterinary Corps (RVC). Government has approved Women Officers in RVC on 01.03.2023 and four out of 20 officers into RVC in 2023 are women.

(v) Colonel (Select Grade). Women Officers are also being considered for Colonel (Select Grade) ranks and are being given command appointments. Certain waivers have also been given to WOs to rule out any impediment in career progression of those who could not undergo mandatory career courses during the transition period.

Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs)/ Other Ranks (OR). Provision for enrolment of women as Other Ranks in Corps of Military Police in the Indian Army has been introduced in 2019. Under the scheme, 1700 women are targeted to be inducted in a phased manner (approximately 100 per year). The induction of women has commenced from 2020. The first batch of 100 women in Other Ranks passed out in first week of May 2021, after completion of 61 weeks of training. Another 100 women soldiers have been inducted through the Agnipath Scheme. 100 vacancies each have been catered for in Agnipath Scheme for the Recruiting Years 2022-23 and 2023-24.

#### Indian Air Force:

(i) Women officers are inducted in all branches and streams of Indian Air Force. Gender neutral approach is facilitating the employment of women officers of Indian Air Force in all combat roles without any restrictions. They are flying fighter aircraft and operating from the length and breadth of the country in all branches of the IAF with pride.

(ii) Opportunities for a career in IAF are widely publicized through print/electronic media and special publicity drives. An opening has also been provided through NCC Special Entry for flying SSC (Women) from July 2017 onwards.

(iii) 'DISHA' cell at Air HQ conducts various Induction Publicity programmes across the country related to induction/ career of Officer Cadre in the IAF. Women candidates are encouraged during such publicity drives to join the IAF as a preferred career option.

(iv) Conduct of motivational talks by women officers give opportunity to female students to interact with them and clear their apprehensions. The scope of choosing IAF as a career is covered in terms of prospects, facilities, work profile, benefits etc. during these sessions.

#### Indian Navy:

Indian Navy (IN) ensures gender neutrality in almost all aspects. The steps taken by IN to give equal opportunities to women akin to their male counterparts and to accommodate more women into the Indian Navy are as follows:-

(i) Permanent Commission to Women Officers SSC women officers in the Indian Navy are eligible for consideration towards grant of Permanent Commission. As on date, 59 women officers (excluding Medical and Dental officers) have been granted PC.

(ii) Women Officers Onboard Ships. Women officers are being appointed onboard warships. Currently, 33 women officers are deployed on afloat billets.

(iii) Naval Air Operations (NAO) Officers on Helicopters. Women NAO officers have been appointed as specialist NAO officers to ship borne helicopters.

- (iv) RPA Stream. Women officers can join the Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) stream and the first woman officer joined RPA squadron in March 2021.
- (v) Diplomatic Assignment. A woman officer has been appointed ADA, Moscow since January 2020.
- (vi) Overseas Assignments. Women NAO officers have been deputed overseas to Maldives, as part of Dornier aircrew for a period of one year w.e.f. September 2020 onwards. In addition, women officers are also deputed abroad for shorter durations as part of Mobile Training Teams and other foreign cooperation engagements.
- (vii) Entry of Women into NDA. Entry of women candidates into NDA has been permitted from 2022 wherein women officers are being inducted as PC officers. Three vacancies per batch have been allocated at NDA for women candidates of Navy and the first batch has joined in July 2022.
- (viii) Women in all Branches/ Cadres/ Specialisations. Entry of women in all Branches/ Cadres/ Specialisations (except Submarine specialization) is targeted to commence w.e.f. June, 2023.
- (ix) Women as Agniveers. As part of the Agnipath Scheme, women have been enrolled as Agniveers commencing from the first batch itself. They are subjected to the same training curriculum, professional courses and retention criteria as compared to their male counterparts.

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