

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1755
TO BE ANSWERED ON 21.09.2020

VACANT DIPLOMATIC POST

1755. SHRI KARTI P. CHIDAMBARAM:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) the number and details of diplomatic posts currently vacant in foreign embassies, high commissions and permanent missions;
- (b) the details of the current gap between the total sanctioned strength and the total actual strength of IFS cadres;
- (c) whether the Government has taken any measures to fill this gap in the last three years;
- (d) if so, the details thereof and if not, reasons therefor;
- (e) the details of any Cadre Review undertaken by the Government in the last ten years;
- (f) whether the Ministry has acted on recent concerns regarding the low strength of the IFS and total diplomatic cadres of the country; and
- (g) if so, the details thereof and if not, reasons therefor?

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN]**

(a) to (d) The sanctioned Cadre strength of the Indian Foreign Service is 978 against which there are 815 Cadre officers and 49 officers on deputation. In addition, the Ministry regularly fills vacancies by a combination of direct recruitment through the Civil Services Examination conducted by UPSC and promotion from feeder Cadre as per extant Rules. The Ministry has placed an indent of 48 with DoPT and UPSC for Civil Services Examinations 2019 and 2020.

Vacancies at Diplomatic or Consular levels in Indian Missions abroad are regularly reviewed and officers appointed. Generally, gaps between the departure of incumbents and the arrival of their successors are kept to a minimum. However, as the posting chains often involve several officers, on some occasions, Missions/Posts abroad face some short-term vacancies. The COVID-19 situation has also led to temporary delays in the movement of personnel. There are 197 Missions/Posts and 3 Representative offices of India in different countries. It is not possible to determine the exact number of vacancies since this is a continuous process with some officers demitting charge and others assuming charge in our Missions/Posts abroad.

Recently on account of the global pandemic of COVID-19, various countries including India enforced strict lock-downs and restrictions on movement. This has severely impacted movement of officials to allotted

stations of posting in a timely manner. Vacancies arising on account of delayed movements are temporary in nature, and all efforts are being made by the Ministry to facilitate the movement of its officers through Vande Bharat Mission flights or under air-bubble agreements with partner countries.

(e) Nil. The last Cadre Review for the Indian Foreign Service was undertaken in 2004.

(f) & (g) To meet the growing needs of India's diplomatic outreach the Ministry implemented the MEA expansion plan of 2008 as also expanded its strength with the opening of new Missions in Africa starting from 2018.
