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Title: Need to review defence preparedness and to address the problems in Defence Services.

SHRIMATI BOTCHA JHANSI LAKSHMI (VIZIANAGARAM): In last week of April, 2012 the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence has tabled the report in the Parliament which revealed details of the country's lack of defence preparedness. "Ageing aircraft fleet, scarcity of choppers, not enough tank ammunition and shortage of artillery guns, the picture is far from perfect on the defence front. India is surrounded by difficult neighbours and as such there is an urgent need to allocate adequate outlay to the Services." The committee said it was "alarmed at the way deficiencies have been allowed to persist. The IAF, at present, has 34 fighter squadrons against the sanctioned strength of 42. The strength is likely to reduce further to 31 during the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan period - 2012-2017. The defence expenditure of India is lowest as compared to the US, China, Pakistan, Russia and France. The military expenditure in terms of percentage of the GDP in all these countries except Pakistan is increasing over the years."

So far as recruitment of women in the Armed Forces is concerned, the Indian Army accounts for only 2.44 per cent in its ranks, the Navy 3 per cent and the Air Force 6.7 per cent. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Indian Army has again said that permanent commission to women officers should be limited to only legal and education wings at present. I suggest that a sizeable presence of women in the Armed Forces be considered seriously on the lines of Central Industrial Security Force.

Finally, I want to say a few words about the Defence forces not getting fair deal. There was a news report "Babudom holds back pay scale upgrade for armed forces". The report says that the para-military forces and civilian officers were getting higher pay scale than the armed forces, thus lowering their status and pay structure.

I would like to remind Hon'ble Minister of Defence that in December, 2008, the Prime Minister declared that the pay scale matter needed to be addressed by setting up of a high powered committee, which has not come up so far even after four years. The armed forces are not being treated at par with the paramilitary forces and Group A officers in the Government.

I request the Hon'ble Minister of Defence to address these issues.