

Standing Committee Report Summary

Working Conditions in Border Guarding Forces

- The Standing Committee on Home Affairs (Chairperson: Mr. P. Chidambaram) submitted its report on ‘Working Conditions in Border Guarding Forces’ on December 12, 2018. These forces include the Assam Rifles (which guards the Indo-Myanmar border), Border Security Force (BSF, which guards the Indo-Pakistan and Indo-Bangladesh borders), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP, which guards the Indo-China border), and the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB, which guards the Indo-Bhutan and Indo-Nepal borders). Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
- **Recruitment:** The Committee noted that there were vacancies among different Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs). For example, it noted that there were 206 vacancies at the Sub-Inspector level in the SSB, in 2018. The Committee stated that there was lack of foresight, planning, and proactive estimation of future vacancies. It recommended that the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) could explore the possibility of proactively identifying vacancies and reporting the same to recruitment agencies.
- **Promotion avenues:** The Committee observed that there was stagnation in promotions among the CAPFs. It noted that in the ITBP, a constable gets promoted to head constable in 12-13 years, as against the required period of five years. The Committee recommended that appropriate measures must be taken to reduce the time for promotion, to boost the morale of personnel.
- The Committee further observed that cadre review for Assam Rifles and ITBP was pending, and in the case of ITBP and SSB, cadre review has been done for only certain ranks. It stated that cadre review of border guarding forces is essential to maintain their organizational structure. The Committee recommended that steps should be undertaken to expedite cadre review of these forces.
- **Deputation to CAPFs:** The Committee noted that a certain quota has been fixed for IPS officers in CAPFs. It stated that the nature of work of CAPFs is more similar to the armed forces rather than the police forces. In this context, the Committee recommended that the MHA, in consultation with the Ministry of Defence, should explore the induction of armed forces personnel in CAPFs on short-term deputation.
- **Electricity supply:** The Committee noted that there was lack of electricity at several installations of Border Out Posts (BOPs), particularly those of the SSB and the ITBP. This seriously affects the working conditions of the personnel as well as operations of the CAPFs. The Committee recommended that the MHA should form a working group to study the issue of energy security for BOPs.
- **Road connectivity and mobility:** The Committee noted that personnel of the Assam Rifles are located in remote areas, and therefore, all-weather roads are required to improve their working conditions. Similarly, it observed that there was a requirement of construction of 4,210 kms of roads, in areas where the BSF are deployed. The Committee recommended that all these projects must be considered in a time-bound manner and an early decision must be taken to approve them, so that construction work on the ground is started without delay.
- Further, the Committee noted that the swift mobility of ITBP personnel was of high strategic importance. In this context, it recommended that the proposal for procurement of special vehicles must be considered without delay, and the procurement be completed in a time-bound manner.
- **Composition of Assam Rifles:** The Committee noted that the 80:20 ratio of officers from the Indian Army to that of the Assam Rifles (AR) cadre, was heavily skewed against the officers in the AR cadre. It recommended that the proposal to increase the strength of AR cadre officers should be considered at the earliest, to strike a balance between Indian Army and AR cadre officers.

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