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Suicides, fratricides in CAPFs: Task force report points to discrimination, abuse trauma, bullying

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For fratricide incidents, the task force says jawans get violent when their problems are not resolved. (Representational/File)

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Discrimination among sub-groups, trauma of being abused, bullying at workplace, fear of initiation of disciplinary or legal action, lack of communication between company commander and jawans – these are some of the reasons cited by a task force formed to look into suicide and fratricide cases in the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs). The task force was constituted by the Home Ministry to study and analyse incidents and prepare a comprehensive report.

In its draft-report submitted to the MHA last month, the task force found three major factors — service conditions, working conditions, and personal/individual issues — that led to incidents of suicides and fratricides.

The task force was headed by V S K Kaumudi, the Special Secretary (internal security) in the Home ministry and the first meeting of the task force held on December 24, 2021. The MHA later formed a drafting committee headed by Additional Director General (Training) of the CRPF, with two IGs of ITBP and BPR&D as members.

“Under the service conditions, the task force found ‘leaves’ the main trigger in CRPF, ITBP, BSF, SSB, Assam Rifles. It also came across discrimination among sub-groups, trauma of being abused, bullying at workplace, fear of initiation of disciplinary or legal actions. It also recorded lack of communication between the company commander and troops due to various reasons, frequent transfers being one of them,” a source said.

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“Among reasons for suicides, the task force recorded extended working hours, inadequate time to rest and recreation, lack of job satisfaction as compared with their counterparts of other sectors, sense of isolation and lack of social as well as familial support, and lack of robust grievance redressal mechanism,” the source said.

Data, shows that in total, 642 personnel, including 10 women personnel, had committed suicide and 51 fratricide incidents took place in the CAPFs between 2017 and 2021. The maximum suicide incidents for the said period were reported in the CRPF (227), while 175 suicides, including 4 women personnel, were from the BSF.

“Under the working conditions, the task force cites issues like prolonged deployment in high-risk areas, long separation from families/forced bachelorship, tough duty hours, inhospitable and adverse climatic conditions leading to fatigue, and depression,” the source said.

Last year, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs headed by BJP's Rajya Sabha member Brijlal, had also observed that the CAPFs function under

much duress, given the nature of their duty that requires their postings in areas with harsh climatic conditions. “So, to ease their mental state and reduce stress, leaves at appropriate intervals are a necessity, so that they can spend time with their families,” it had suggested.

For fratricide incidents, the task force says jawans get violent when their problems are not resolved. “It also found that jawans don’t get leaves even when their family members are critically ill or in case of death... and humiliation is the biggest provocation,” the source said.

“On personal issues, the task force records stigma of certain diseases, mental/psychiatric disorders, feeling of hopelessness/depression, groupism/casteism/instigation by others on petty issues, drug/alcohol abuse, extra-marital relationship of self/spouse, financial issues, and impact of frequent transfers on the children’s education,” the source said.

Sources said the task force also flagged slow promotions, continuous posting in conflict theatres, dissatisfaction from the New Pension Scheme, little opportunity for growth and development, absence of trained professionals to deal with the trauma of personnel in the CAPFs.

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