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Premium

After 108 women officers, 40 more set to get Colonel rank

According to a senior official, approximately 150 vacancies have been released for women officers up to the 2009 batch.

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Women officers of the Indian Army at an event in Delhi. (Express File Photo)

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AROUND 40 more women Army officers are set to be cleared for the rank of colonel (selection grade) in phases over the next two to three years, a move that will make them eligible to command units in their respective arms and services in the future, senior officials familiar with the matter told The Indian Express.

At present, Women Officers Special No. 3 Selection Board proceedings are under way at Army headquarters for considering 20 officers from the Army Service Corps and 17 officers from the Army Ordnance Corps from the 2006 batch for promotion to the rank of Colonel from Lieutenant Colonel, to bring them on a par with their male counterparts.

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Both fresh and review cases are under consideration of the special selection board, which began its proceedings on March 27 and will go on until March 31.

According to a senior official, approximately 150 vacancies have been released for women officers up to the 2009 batch.

A total of 108 women officers out of 244 — from 1992 to 2006 batch — were cleared for the rank of colonels by a special selection board in January this year and they have already assumed command roles in various Army units across the country.

EXPLAINED**Ready for command roles**

The SC order to grant permanent commission to women Army officers in Feb 2020 opened the doors for their promotion across all streams of the Army, except pure combat arms. Subsequently, several women officers are undergoing special training courses and military assignments, which will empower them for higher leadership roles.

The remaining women officers — up to the 2009 batch — will now be considered against the existing vacancies (around 40) with the Army.

A special selection board is being held periodically for women officers because they have not undergone several mandatory leadership courses during their career — unlike their male counterparts — as they were earlier not eligible for senior leadership roles in the Army without permanent commission granted to them.

Exceptions were medical officers in the defence forces, and in the Judge Advocate General (JAG) branch and the Army Education Corps, the two arms where women officers were granted permanent commission in 2008.

“Each of these courses have specific marks against them, but most women officers have not undergone them and have thus scored zero against those heads,” an official explained.

“This is because they were earlier not eligible for permanent commission and thus had a limited period career in the force; there were no promotion avenues for women officers to become a colonel and command a unit like male Army officers. Hence, they were not selected for these leadership courses,” the official added.

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As a result, it was unfair to consider them in same board as their male counterparts, the official said.

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