

Supreme Court rules that CAPF officers to be 'organised services' for all purposes

The top court orders for IPS deputation to CAPFs in senior ranks to be reduced progressively within two years

Updated - May 23, 2025 11:31 pm IST - New Delhi



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The Supreme Court order is expected to enable service rules to be amended and cadre review to be done within six months. File | Photo Credit: Nissar Ahmad

The Supreme Court on Friday (May 23, 2025) ruled that Group A officers of the Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) from batches dating back to 1986 are recognised as "Organised Services" for "all purposes"

A Bench of Justice A.S. Oka and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan said in a judgment that the deputation posts of Indian Police Service (IPS) officers in the Senior Administrative Grade (SAG) or up to the rank of Inspector General (IG) in CAPFs should be “progressively reduced over a period of time, say within an outer limit of two years”. It was Justice Oka’s last day in office.

Friday’s (May 23, 2025) judgment paves the way for service rules or recruitment rules to be amended, allowing all connected benefits of Organised Group A Services (OGAS) to CAPFs and cadre review within six months.

Presently, 20% of posts in the rank of Deputy Inspector General (DIG) and 50% of posts in the rank of Inspector General (IG) in CAPFs are reserved for IPS officers.

The decision is likely to benefit around 13,000 CAPF officers. A CAPF official said that presently, an officer who joins as Assistant Commandant (AC) takes 25 years to be promoted as a Commandant, whereas he or she should attain the seniority in 13 years. A DIG rank official said that he reached the position after 31 years in service, against the 21-year required tenure.

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The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is the cadre controlling authority of CAPFs.

The CAPFs comprise the Border Security Force (BSF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).

The issue was earlier examined by the Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court in 2015 and 2019, respectively, when it was decided that CAPFs come in the category of organised services such as the Indian Foreign Service and the India Revenue Service (IRS), among others.

In 2021, Group A officers of the CAPFs approached the apex court again, seeking Non Functional Financial Upgradation (NFFU), cadre review and restructuring and amendment of recruitment rules to eliminate IPS deputation and allow internal promotions up to SAG.

The Court said that the “core of the grievances of the appellants as it appears, are non-recognition as OGAS, non-grant of NFFU and service stagnation”.

In 2006, as a part of the Sixth Central Pay Commission’s recommendations, the concept of NFFU was introduced to address stagnation among Group A service officers. So, in case of a lack of vacancies, if an officer of an organised service is promoted, the others of that batch will also get financial upgradation even if they are not promoted.

“The grievance is focused on the existing recruitment rules which provides for lateral entry into their respective services by way of deputation to various posts by officers belonging to the IPS, in the process resulting in complete stagnation in their service careers,” the Court said. The appellants contended that once the CAPFs are declared as OGAS for “all purposes”, consequential steps like cadre review and restructuring of the service rules/recruitment rules will follow eliminating lateral entry, like by way of deputation.

The Centre told the Court that “being an armed force of the Union, the purpose is to keep each of the CAPFs fit for fighting as well as to ensure coordinated action between the States and the Centre within the federal framework of our country” and therefore, “deputation of IPS officers is necessary”.

The Court said that it cannot be “oblivious of the grievance” expressed by CAPF.

“Their dedicated service upholding the security, integrity and sovereignty of the nation while safeguarding our borders and maintaining internal security within the country cannot be ignored or overlooked. They discharge their duties under very demanding conditions. They have a grievance that because of lateral entry into the higher grades of the respective CAPFs, they are unable to get their timely promotion. ...Such stagnation can adversely impact the morale of the forces,” the Court said.