CAPF - Problems & Suggestions

State police forces are in a shambles:

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- State police force and its politicisation and, to an extent, criminalisation through a nexus with corrupt politicians, bureaucrats and the mafia has been causing havoc in the management of internal security.
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- Any number of commissions, including the National Police Commission, have drawn attention to the sordid state of affairs, but without any significant impact on the powers that be.
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- **The Supreme Court issued a set of directions in 2006** and has been trying to nudge the states — but with very little effect. As a consequence, things are going from bad to worse.
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What is the working condition of CAPF personnel?

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- And now, we have disturbing news from the **CAPF, whose personnel have vented their grievances through social media.** The rumblings have been there for quite some time.
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- The failure of leadership at different levels, was bound to erupt one day. Growing resentment over the allegedly **poor quality food** is symptomatic — the dissatisfaction runs much deeper. The personnel are not happy with **service conditions**, which are harsh for some of the CAPFs.
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- Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) personnel have to work in snow-bound areas round the year; there are hardly any peace stations for them.
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- Border Security Force (BSF) personnel have to **perform duties in snow-bound areas, in desert tracts and in jungle terrain,** depending on the border they are deployed at.

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- The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel are over-stretched and on the move most of the time.
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What are the suggestions given?

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- Suggestions have often been given to the home ministry to bring about **some kind of rotation in the duties** of these personnel, so they have time to refresh themselves and recuperate.
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- However, these ideas did not find favour. No wonder there is considerable attrition within the forces and large numbers go on voluntary retirement after completing the mandatory 20 years of service.
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What are the major problems?

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- **Unplanned expansion of the forces** has made human resource management a stupendous problem. Today, the CRPF has a strength of 240 battalions.
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- More than 20 years ago, it was recorded in a policy document of the home ministry that an open-ended expansion of the Central Armed Police Forces must stop.
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- However, expansion continues unabated, thanks to exaggerated demands from state governments and the inability of the central government to resist those demands.
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- A haphazard expansion of the central forces has also meant, there were **deficiencies in infrastructure**. There is an acute shortage of housing in the forces. In the CRPF, for example, the level of satisfaction is only 12.5% as against the target of 25%.
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- The deployment statement of the CAPFs is very distressing. About 95 per cent of the force remains deployed throughout the year. This affects both

training and the discipline and morale of the forces.
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- The men aren’t even able to avail of their leave, which causes anger and resentment that **sometimes erupts in grave incidents of fratricide.** An absence of promotional opportunities is also causing frustration in some forces.
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- Another factor, is the growing hiatus between the officers and the men. **The kind of fellow feeling, the camaraderie is gradually fading.** A number of factors are responsible for this.\n
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    - The non-gazetted levels today are much more educated than they were in the past. These personnel have higher expectations and their loyalty cannot be taken for granted.
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    - Politicisation has eroded the chain of command. Senior officers are quite often not able to transfer or punish delinquent junior officers because of their political linkages.
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- The home ministry officers who deal with these problems have no first-hand knowledge of the working conditions of the forces and therefore tend to be insensitive.
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What the central & state govt should do?

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- At the state level, there is a **shortage of 5,00,000 police personnel**. The Centre should work out a formula, in consultation with the state governments, to fill these vacancies so as to lessen their dependence on central forces.
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- In fact, even if these vacancies are filled up, the states would still be short of manpower by international standards. Our effort should be to attain a level of at least 200 policemen per 1,00,000 persons. Presently, the figure stands at 182 on paper and 139 on the ground.
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- **The existing grievance redressal mechanism needs to be revisited.** It will have to be made more broad-based. More channels need to be opened

for grievances to be aired.
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- It will not be possible to impose any kind of ban over the use of social media by personnel. However, rules could be framed and dos and dont’s prescribed for using social media.
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Conclusion:

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- All is not well and it would not be proper to adopt an ostrich-like policy. The quality of food may be improved today but a comprehensive approach is called for.
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- The government of India would be well advised to set up a high-powered commission to look into the plethora of problems facing the Central Armed Police Forces and suggest long-term solutions for those.
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