

Handling Dissents in Security Forces

Why in news?

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Four different videos of constable of the BSF's 29th battalion surfaced online in which he talks about working conditions and complains about the food that is allegedly being served.

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What is BSF?

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- The **Border Security Force (BSF)** is the primary Border guarding force of India.

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- It is one of the five Central Armed Police Forces of the Union of India.

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- It was established in the wake of the 1965 War on 1 December 1965.

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- Its head is designated as a Director-General (DG), since its raising has been an officer from the Indian Police Service.

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- BSF has been termed as the First Line of Defence of Indian Territories.

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- The term "paramilitary forces" in India has not been defined in any acts or by authorities officially however they are conventionally used to refer to two forces i.e. Assam Rifles and Special Frontier Force.

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- CAPF were formerly referred as Paramilitary Forces.

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- In March 2011, Ministry of Home Affairs adopted a uniform nomenclature as CAPF for 5 forces i.e Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) and BSF.

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How BSF responded to the allegations?

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- Generally, the security forces around the world don't like dissent.
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- The BSF has directed its **“special snoop teams”** to check on the morale of its personnel.
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- Representatives of an intelligence network have been directed to report instantly about the morale of the force as well as cases of indiscipline.
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- Efforts are made to counter wrong propaganda on social media.
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- It also said that instances of complaints being voiced via the social media are strictly being dealt with.
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- Similarly an **internal vigilance** under **Inspector General** level officer has been setup and along with vigilance officers up to battalion levels to counter corruption in the force.
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- The BSF also claimed that the force has **robust grievance redressal system** within its establishment from the lowest field unit up to the director general (DG) level.
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Are these measures enough?

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- Setting up an internal vigilance panel shows good intent.
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- But a panel headed by one of their own, questions their credibility in dealing the corruption cases.
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- Also the snoop teams formed on their own might be misused to censure more individual soldiers resorting to social media.
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- If the claim of grievance redressal system is true, then the jawans would not have taken to social media to air their grievances and there would be no need to refurbish the complaint mechanism.
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- By “disciplining” complaining soldiers and denying that there is a problem,

the BSF is doing a great disservice.

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- The key to addressing such issues is to address directly set up systems and procedures to ensure that the jawans get what is their due.

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- Formal and informal interaction levels with jawans has to be enhanced.

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- Supplementing these processes, supervisory officers, whenever they visit posts or locations should hold meetings to address the personnel under their command where the individual can report.

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Source: Hindustan Times

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