



## Suicide Among CAPF Personnel

**For Prelims:** [Central Industrial Security Force \(CISF\)](#), [Central Armed Police Forces \(CAPF\)](#), [National Crime Records Bureau \(NCRB\)](#), [Army](#), [Navy](#), [Air Force](#), [New Pension Scheme \(NPS\)](#), [Old Pension Scheme \(OPS\)](#), [Rath Yatra](#), [Mental Health Championship Program](#).

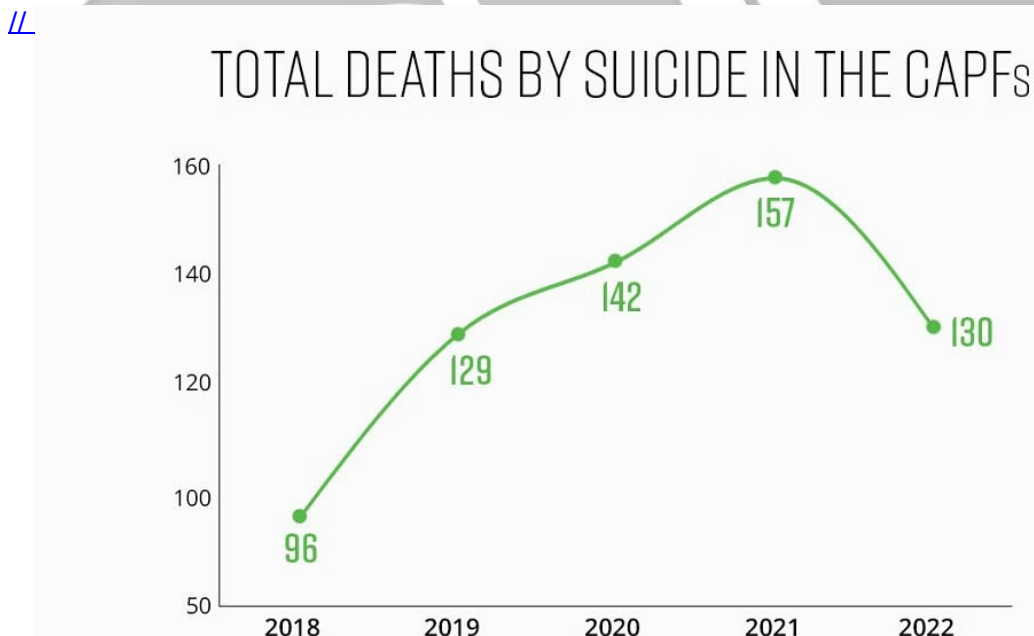
**For Mains:** Suicide among CAPFs and prevention strategy.

[Source: TH](#)

### Why in News?

The [Central Industrial Security Force \(CISF\)](#) has successfully **reduced** its suicide rate by **40%**, from **25 deaths in 2023 to 15 in 2024**.

- According to data from the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**, 654 [Central Armed Police Forces \(CAPF\)](#) personnel died by [suicide](#) between 2018 and 2022.
  - There were **230 suicides in the CRPF**, 174 in the BSF, 89 in the CISF, 64 in the SSB, 54 in the ITBP, 43 in the Assam Rifles, and **3 in NSG**.



Source: March 2023 report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs



**Note:** According to [National Crime Records Bureau \(NCRB\)](#) data 2022, the **national suicide rate** stood at **12.4 per lakh** in 2022.

- The suicide rate is the number of **suicides per 1,00,000 people** in a given population.

## What are the Reasons for Suicide Among CAPFs?

- **Stressful Deployments:** Personnel are often stationed in hostile regions such as [Naxal-affected areas](#) and conflict zones like **Jammu and Kashmir** without sufficient breaks.
  - **Lack of "peace postings"** akin to the Army exacerbates mental fatigue.
    - Peace postings means stationing of troops in **relatively stable and non-hostile environments**, as opposed to conflict zones or high-tension areas like borders or insurgency-affected regions.
- **Family Separation:** Long durations away from families result in **emotional strain** and difficulties in addressing family issues like **land disputes or financial management**.
  - More than **80% of troops** those who died by suicide were reported after they **returned home from leave**.
- **Mental Health Challenges:** Seeking psychological help is **stigmatized** in the forces, with limited mental health support systems.
  - Suicide attempts are **lower among female personnel**, as males often avoid sharing problems due to fear of peer ridicule.
  - Many people consider the [Army, Navy, and Air Force](#) as **"real" forces** leading to **further demotivation** among the **CAPF troops**.
- **Career Progression Issues:** There is **limited scope for promotions** among CAPFs. Personnel have had to serve in the **same post for as long as 10 years** in some cases.
  - **Higher ranks** are reserved for [IPS officers](#) and CAPF personnel **feel dejected** contributing to mental stress.
- **Lack of Job Satisfaction:** Army personnel have access to **Army hospitals** in major cities for their **families' health and treatment**, and their families enjoy a broader selection of products from **Army canteens** compared to CAPF personnel.
  - CAPFs are under the [New Pension Scheme \(NPS\)](#) with **lower payouts** compared to the [Old Pension Scheme \(OPS\)](#) for armed forces personnel.
- **Access to Firearms:** Easy access to **service weapons** increases the risk of impulsive acts during periods of distress.

# CENTRAL ARMED POLICE FORCES (CAPF)

The CAPF includes the seven security forces in India functioning under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

## Assam Rifles (AR)

- ↳ **Origin:** 1835, as militia called 'Cachar Levy'
- ⊕ **Erstwhile objective:** To protect British Tea estates
- ↳ **Current Objectives:**
  - ⊕ Conducting anti-terrorist operations in NER
  - ⊕ Ensuring security at India-China and India-Myanmar borders
- ↳ **Imp Role in:**
  - ⊕ Sino-India War 1962
  - ⊕ Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to Sri Lanka (1987)

Due to long association with tribal belts, Assam Rifles are also called 'Friends of the North East'

## Border Security Force (BSF)

- ↳ **Origin:** 1965
- ↳ **Objectives:**
  - ⊕ Securing land borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh
  - ⊕ Also performing Anti-Infiltration in Kashmir Valley
  - ⊕ Counter Insurgency in NER
  - ⊕ Anti-Naxal Operations in Odisha and Chhattisgarh
- ↳ **Wings:** Air wing, marine wing, an artillery regiment, and commando units

BSF is India's First Line of Defence and the world's largest border guarding force

## Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)

- ↳ **Pre-Independence Origin:** 1939 (Crown Representative's Police)
- ↳ **Post Independence:** 1949 - under CRPF Act, became Central Reserve Police Force
- ↳ **Objective:** Crowd control, riot control, counter militancy/insurgency operations, etc.

CRPF is the principle central police force for internal security

## Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)

- ↳ **Origin:** 1962
- ↳ **Objectives:**
  - ⊕ Deployed on border from Karakoram Pass (Ladakh) to Jachep La (Arunachal Pradesh) (~3488 km of Indo-China Border)
  - ⊕ Manning Border Outposts on altitudes 9000 ft - 18700 ft in Western, Middle and Eastern sectors of Indo-China Border

ITBP is India's specialised mountain force & the first responder to natural disasters

## National Security Guard (NSG)

- ↳ **Origin:** 1984 (came into being in 1986), following Operation Blue Star
- ↳ **Objectives:** Counter-terrorism unit/Federal Contingency Force
- ↳ **Task-oriented Force - Two complementary elements:**
  - ⊕ Special Action Group (SAG)
  - ⊕ Special Ranger Groups (SRG)

## Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)

- ↳ **Origin:** 1963
- ↳ **Objectives:**
  - ⊕ Guarding Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan borders
  - ⊕ Enhance border security, curb trans-border crimes, prevent unauthorised entry/exit, halt smuggling, etc.

## Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)

- ↳ **Origin:** Central Industrial Security Force Act, 1968
- ↳ **Objectives:** Ensuring security of major critical infrastructure installations

CISF is the sole CAPF unit with a specialised fire wing



Drishti IAS

## Why Suicide Rate is Higher Among CRPF Personnel?

- **Statistics:** MHA data shows that there were **36 suicides** in the CRPF in **2018**, rising to **40 in 2019**, **54 in 2020**, and **57 in 2021**. The numbers dipped to **43 in 2022**.
- **Over Reliance on CRPF:** State police forces often lack the resources, manpower, and training to handle crises, forcing the CRPF to step in.
  - The CRPF ensures **free and fair elections** and maintains order at events like **Ganesh Chaturthi** in Maharashtra and **Rath Yatra in Odisha**.
  - This **adds to the workload** and **reduces opportunities for rest**.

## What are Government Initiatives to Address Suicides Among CAPF Personnel?

- **Task Force Formation:** A task force was set up by **MHA in December 2021** to identify risk

factors, prevention strategies, and conduct research on suicides in CAPFs.

- It has identified **3 main risk factors** contributing to suicides in CAPFs i.e., **working conditions, service conditions, and personal/individual issues**.
- **E-Leave Systems:** The CRPF's **SAMBHAV app** enables personnel to apply for **leave instantly**, with leave approval processed through the **e-leave portal**.
- **Mental Health Support:** The CRPF has brought in **mental health counselors** to support the emotional well-being of troops.
  - In CRPF, **pairs of personnel** are assigned as **“buddies”** to monitor and support each other, acting as an **early warning system** for mental health concerns.
  - **CISF** launched the **Mental Health Championship Program** for supervisors to identify early signs of **mental health issues**.
    - CISF's initiatives are supported by **Project Mann**, a mental health helpline providing **24/7 tele-counseling** and in-person sessions.
  - BSF partnered with AIIMS, New Delhi to provide counselling services, with dedicated budgets allocated.
- **Family-Centric Interventions:** Cases of depression and mental illness are closely monitored, with efforts to **allow family members to stay with affected personnel**.

## Way Forward

- **Workload Management:** Ensure that personnel are stationed in **peaceful, non-hostile environments** periodically to **reduce stress**.
  - **Train state police forces** and increase manpower to **handle law enforcement crises** effectively so that CAPFs aren't overburdened.
- **Job Satisfaction:** Improve **promotion opportunities** within CAPFs by creating clearer pathways for advancement and ensuring that senior positions are **not exclusively reserved for IPS officers**.
- **Family Support Programs:** Allow more opportunities for family members to live with personnel or provide **family visits** during assignments.
- **Policy Support:** Ensure that existing policies around **mental health care, leave systems, and career progression** are **more flexible** to accommodate the unique challenges faced by CAPF personnel.
- **Skill Development:** Provide **on the job training** to CAPF personnel to earn a **dignified living** post retirement. E.g., **beekeeping, mushroom cultivation** etc.

### **Drishti Mains Question:**

What factors contribute to high suicide rates in Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), and how can these issues be addressed?

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### **Prelims**

**Q. What is “Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD)”, sometimes seen in the news? (2018)**

- (a) An Israeli radar system
- (b) India's indigenous anti-missile programme
- (c) An American anti-missile system
- (d) A defence collaboration between Japan and South Korea.

**Ans: (c)**



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