



CRPF's Bastariya Battalion

What is the issue?

\n\n

- \n
 - CRPF has constituted a new battalion of local recruits to deal with the Naxals.
- \n
 - While some see this as an innovative approach to address the problem, other fear that the battalion might is a refurbishment of the violent Salwa Judum.

\n\n

What is the Bastariya Battalion?

\n\n

- \n
 - Bastariya Warriors is a newly formed battalion of the CRPF that consists of 549 recruits, all of whom are exclusively from the 4 districts of Bastar region.
- \n
 - Notably, several physical and educational relaxations were granted to aspirants to facilitate recruitment.
- \n
 - Following the completion of the 44-week training programme, the battalion is expected to be deployed soon.
- \n
 - According to the CRPF, the battalion will be immensely helpful in operations, as its recruits are familiar with the local terrain and language.
- \n
 - This battalion is expected to act as a bridge between the local populations in the Red Corridor and other CRPF personnel (mostly from elsewhere in India).
- \n
 - Nevertheless, this force has evoked the troubling memories of Salwa Judum.

\n\n

What is Salwa Judum?

\n\n

- \n
 - Salwa Judum was an armed force that was mobilised in 2005 (informally by politicians) and deployed in parts of Chhattisgarh.
- \n
 - Local tribal people were armed to counter Maoists in Bastar, and those who supported the idea stated that it was a spontaneous uprising of tribals.
- \n
 - Hence, with tacit support of the government, Salwa Judham was initiative that turned tribal youth into a vigilant but ill trained army.
- \n
 - But as the force took ground, it established a reign of terror in the region, and was subsequently banned by the Supreme Court in 2011.
- \n
 - Notably, allegations against Judum were numerous, with attack against civilians ranging from -killings, torching of villages, sexual assaults etc...
- \n
 - Also, as the face-off between the Maoists and Judum intensified, both sides showed little sensitivity to the locals caught in cross fire.

\n\n

What are the views of detractors against the battalion?

\n\n

- \n
 - Activists argue that like the Judum, the Bastariya Battalion seeks to pit tribals against tribals and could again cleave tribal society.
- \n
 - If a villager was to join the Battalion, then their families run the risk of attracting the ire of Maoists (recorded threats already aplenty).
- \n
 - Data also indicates that during and immediately after the end of Judum's activities, there was an unusual spike in Maoist recruitments.
- \n
 - This is probably a case of villagers seeking to safeguard themselves from crude government sponsored violent insurgents - a trend that could repeat itself.
- \n
 - Notably, 'District Reserve Group' (DRG) of Chhattisgarh Police is also

majorly constituted of former Maoists and Judum soldiers.

\n

- Activists point out that DRG too has had a poor track record in human rights and anti-naxal operations.

\n

\n\n

What is the government's argument for raising the battalion?

\n\n

\n

- The government argues that the battalion will give the security forces an operational dimension, which is currently being provided by the state police.
- CRPF officials also vouch that the major difference between the Judum and Bastariya Battalion is in the intensity and holistic nature of CRPF training.
- The 44-week training is said to cover not just modules on jungle warfare and weapons training, but also civic responsibilities and human rights.
- Hence, it has been argued that Bastariya recruits are regular CRPF constables like a personnel from any other battalion.
- Officials also argue that the presence of locals will increase the sensitivity of the CRPF - especially with one-third of the recruits being women.
- While one has to wait to know if the battalion is a success, it is important for the warriors to realise that they will be rated for human rights too.

\n

\n\n

Source: Indian Express

\n



IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering
A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative