

India to raise 13 new police battalions to tackle Naxals

New Delhi: Thirteen new armed police battalions, including one comprising mostly tribals from the worst Maoist-hit districts, will be raised by the government to tackle the Naxal menace.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved 12 India Reserve battalions for the Left Wing Extremism affected states.

Of the 12 battalions, four will be raised in Chhattisgarh, three each in Jharkhand and Odisha and two in Maharashtra.

The CCS has made it clear that 75 per cent of the posts at constable level will be filled from 27 worst Naxal-hit states and there should be a relaxation in age and educational criteria as considered necessary for recruiting local youths, a Home Ministry official said.

Besides, approval has been given to CRPF for raising a 'Bastariya' battalion by recruiting youths from undivided Bastar district of Chhattisgarh.

For this battalion, all constables will be recruited from tribal dominated Sukma, Dantewada, Narayanpur and Bijapur districts (all parts of undivided Bastar).

Further, two already sanctioned India Reserve battalions will be converted into auxiliary battalions in CRPF by recruiting youths from 15 severely Naxal affected districts of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Maharashtra and Odisha.

Out of these 15 districts, five belong to Chhattisgarh.

The concept of 'Bastariya' battalion was considered useful as the recruits will be mostly tribals who would help address local unemployment issue, provide tactical advantage to CRPF in operations, intelligence collection and language benefits.

While in case of tribal candidates in rest of the country where the minimum height has to be 160cms, as many as 4.5cms has been given as relaxation for the candidates from Bastar region while there will be 10 per cent relaxation in weight, which has to be proportionate to height and age in case of other candidates.

The 'Bastariya' battalion will be deployed in Chhattisgarh for at least five years and pre-recruitment training will be given to the local people.

The government had introduced the scheme of India Reserve battalions in 1971 and so far 153 battalions have been sanctioned to various states.

India Reserve battalions are elite units sanctioned to states and union territories which are equipped and trained to deal with specific situation and used in exceptional circumstances.

Its recruitment is modelled on Central Police Force but states may conduct regional recruitment.

A total of 69 incidents of Naxal violence and killing of 33 security forces personnel and civilians were reported from the 10 Left wing extremism-hit states of the country in the first six months of this year.

According to Home Ministry data, a total of 118 such incidents were reported last year, slightly less than the corresponding figure of 155 in 2014.