

The Times of India

Army holds 141 promotions to Colonel's rank

Nagpur: The army has put on hold promotion of 141 officers from the support arms to the rank of Colonel after a plea challenging the method of creating vacancies to pave way for the promotions was filed. A writ petition was filed by an officer from Corps of Engineers, Lt Colonel Kedar Gokhale, in the Delhi High court. It alleged that the vacancies were not equitably spread among all batches of officers, contravening army's own policy of 2010.

The promotions were granted to officers in support arms of 1992 to 1997 batch.

Support arms include branches like engineers, air defence, signals, military intelligence, and aviation. Only the first three branches are concerned in this case.

A letter issued by the army on September 20 says the 141 promotions have been put in abeyance. The letter, a copy of which is in TOI's possession, also says that representations have also been received from two more officers, which are forwarded to the ministry of defence. The army will wait for the government's decision on distribution of vacancies and conduct of screening boards.

Sources say Gokhale filed a plea after it was seen that recently the officers were first being posted to new places and the promotion were expected to follow. This has not been the regular practice in the army, say sources. Officers say the satisfaction level has been hit and the problems need to be addressed.

The decision has its roots in a cadre rift within the army. The matter was reported by TOI on June 25, when Lt Colonel P K Chaudhary, an officer from Army Services Corps (ASC), along with others, had filed a case in the armed forces tribunal (AFT). The plea challenged the promotion policy on the grounds that it was heavily tilted towards infantry that comes under the arms.

AFT verdict called for quashing decision of all the promotion boards since 2009. The army appealed in the supreme court. The apex court ruled that instead 141 additional vacancies should be created for promotion of officers from supporting arms. As the decision left out those

from the services like ASC, ordnance corps, and EME, officers from this cadre have filed a review petition in the supreme court.

In the meantime Lt Colonel Gokhale moved Delhi high court challenging the method adopted while creating 141 posts for promotions. The plea says the vacancies were not as per the rolling block method which calculates the numbers by deleting one batch each year.

In a Nutshell

- * Cadre rift between officers of services support arms has dogged the army recently
- * This has led to several litigations hampering overall promotions in last 2-3 years
- * Satisfaction level among officers has been affected
- * In 2012 AFT quashed all promotions from 2009
- * Army moved supreme court, which ruled for creating 141 additional vacancies
- * Promotions against these vacancies now put on hold