CAPF Forces Explained: CRPF, BSF, ITBP, CISF, SSB – Roles & Responsibilities

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India's **Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF)** play a vital role in ensuring national security, internal stability, and border protection. Managed by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the CAPFs consist of **five professional paramilitary forces**—CRPF, BSF, ITBP, CISF, and SSB—each entrusted with specialized duties.

Whether you're a defence aspirant, preparing for CAPF AC, or simply curious, this guide provides a **clear and in-depth explanation** of each force, their duties, recruitment processes, and organizational importance.

What Are CAPF Forces?

The **Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF)** are India's premier paramilitary forces responsible for:

- **Border Security**
- **Internal Security**
- **Counter-terrorism**
- **VIP Protection**
- **Industrial Security**
- **Disaster Response**
- **Anti-Naxal Operations**

They act as the backbone of national security in both peace and conflict scenarios.

The five CAPF forces are:

1. **CRPF – Central Reserve Police Force**
2. **BSF – Border Security Force**
3. **ITBP – Indo-Tibetan Border Police**
4. **CISF – Central Industrial Security Force**
5. **SSB – Sashastra Seema Bal**

Let’s understand each in detail.

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1. CRPF – Central Reserve Police Force

Overview

CRPF is the **largest paramilitary force in India** and the main agency for **internal security**.

Primary Roles

✔ Maintaining **law & order**
✔ **Counter-insurgency** operations (J&K, Northeast)
✔ **Anti-Naxal & anti-terrorism** operations
✔ Election duty nationwide
✔ Crowd & riot control
✔ VIP security under Special Protection Group (SPG & Z+ categories)

Special Units

- **COBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action)** – Anti-Naxal
- **RAPID** – Anti-riot
- **Mahila Battalions** – Women-led operations

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2. BSF – Border Security Force

Overview

BSF is India’s **first line of defense** along the **Pakistan and Bangladesh borders**.

Primary Roles

✔ Border surveillance and anti-infiltration
✔ Preventing trafficking, illegal migration & smuggling
✔ Anti-terror duties in border regions
✔ Riverine and coastal security
✔ Providing support during natural disasters

Special Features

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- Operates **camel patrols** in Rajasthan
- Maintains **water wings**, **air wings**, and **marine commando units**

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3. ITBP – Indo-Tibetan Border Police

Overview

ITBP is deployed along the **Indo-China border** at high-altitude regions (up to 18,000 ft).

Primary Roles

✔ High-altitude border security
✔ Surveillance of the Line of Actual Control (LAC)
✔ Disaster rescue during **earthquakes, avalanches**
✔ Support to mountaineering expeditions
✔ Maintaining internal security during elections

Special Training

- Mountain warfare
- Skiing
- Ice-craft and high-altitude survival

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4. CISF – Central Industrial Security Force

Overview

CISF provides security to India’s **critical industrial and strategic installations**.

Primary Roles

✔ Protection of PSUs, industries & power plants
✔ Airport security (all civilian airports)
✔ Metro security (Delhi, Bengaluru, etc.)
✔ Security to nuclear & space installations
✔ Fire wing for emergency management

Important Units Protected

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- ISRO
- BARC
- Airports Authority of India
- Delhi Metro Rail Corporation
- Oil refineries, steel plants, mines

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5. SSB – Sashastra Seema Bal

Overview

SSB guards the **Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan borders**.

Primary Roles

✔ Prevent illegal migration & smuggling
✔ Intelligence-based operations
✔ Promoting harmony among border population
✔ Counter-insurgency & internal security roles
✔ Civic Action Programs for border communities

Unique Feature

These borders are **open borders**, requiring specialized human-intelligence operations.

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CAPF Forces at a Glance (Comparison Table)

CAPF Force	Main Duty	Border/Area Covered	Special Units
CRPF	Internal security & anti-Naxal ops	Across India	COBRA, Rapid, Mahila Battalion
BSF	Border protection	Pakistan & Bangladesh borders	Water Wing, Air Wing, Camel Force
ITBP	High-altitude border protection	China border (LAC)	Mountaineering Units
CISF	Industrial & airport security	Airports, PSUs	Fire Wing, Quick Reaction Teams
SSB	Open border security	Nepal & Bhutan borders	Intelligence Wing

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Why Are CAPF Forces Important?

CAPF forces ensure:

- National security from external threats
- Internal peace and stability
- Safe elections in India
- Protection of vital national assets
- Disaster response & humanitarian aid

They act as the **bridge between the military and state police**, maintaining balance in times of crises.

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FAQs: CAPF Forces Explained

1. How many forces come under CAPF?

There are **five CAPF forces**: CRPF, BSF, ITBP, CISF, and SSB.

2. Which CAPF is the largest?

CRPF is the largest paramilitary force in India.

3. Who controls the CAPF forces?

They are governed by the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.

4. Which CAPF is best for women candidates?

CRPF, CISF, and SSB have **dedicated women battalions**, making them popular choices.

5. Which CAPF has the toughest training?

ITBP is known for the toughest **high-altitude training**.

6. Which is better: CAPF or Army?

Both have different roles—**Army handles external defense**, while **CAPF manages internal and border security**.

7. How can I join CAPF as an Assistant Commandant?

You need to clear the **UPSC CAPF AC Exam**, followed by Physical Tests and Medical Examination.

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